

THE HOUSE OF SUN-GOES-DOWN

~ BERNARD DE VOTO ~

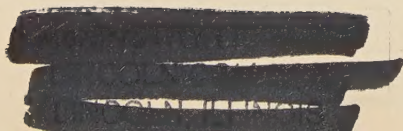
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THE HOUSE OF SUN-GOES-DOWN



By BERNARD DE VOTO

THE CROOKED MILE

THE CHARIOT OF FIRE

THE HOUSE OF SUN-GOES-DOWN

THE House of Sun-Goes-Down

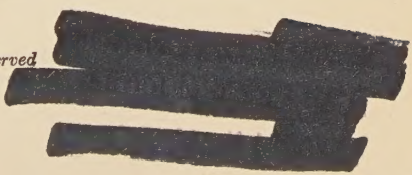
BY
BERNARD DE VOTO

*" . . . Westward into the fourth house of the
earth and sky, the house of falling rain, the
house of sun-goes-down. . . "*

JOHN GALE, *THE DIASPORA*.

New York
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1928

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NOTE

When, in 1923, I began writing *The Crooked Mile*, I had not happened upon the journal of the James Abbey who traveled the Overland Trail some fifteen years before the first events recorded in *The House of Sun-Goes-Down*. Though the grandfather of Gordon Abbey appeared on but a few pages of that earlier novel, I was obliged to give him a name and did not scruple to christen him James. I had discovered the real James Abbey before I began this book but my earlier ignorance necessitated my keeping his name. If any descendants of that first James Abbey are now living and should chance to read this book, the events chronicled herein will convince them that I did not have their journal-keeping ancestor in mind. The writer of fiction must necessarily preëempt someone's name for every character he imagines, but my present apology is the more sincere because, in 1923, I believed that the name Abbey was quite unknown in the early West.

BERNARD DE VOTO.

Cambridge, Massachusetts

1 February, 1928.

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BOOK I
ARTEMISIA

THE HOUSE OF SUN-GOES-DOWN

The life of James Abbey reached its summit one August afternoon in 1865. That day he drove toward the Mississippi and whatever might lie beyond it in the West. He had lived thirty-seven years and thirty-three were left to him, but this day was the parting of the waters. Behind it, it is true, there were other days that looked in its direction: the July day, two years before, when to the twice wounded Captain Abbey, at home in Velden, came dependable tidings that Pemberton had surrendered; the day when Major Abbey's fourth wound brought him home again in time to learn that Lee must go the way of Pemberton; the May day when the Jew came to talk of buying Velden; a June day when he met the Jew at Hazelhurst. That last day most of all, for on that day he made terms with the Jew, on that day he spoke his mind to Judge Bostrom, and on that day he first realized that he need not go West alone.

For a month he had not required the negro Jode, now surmisably his equal, to carry him about. The wound in his groin had healed and he could stand erect. From the three inches more than six feet that a first-born Abbey must possess, he despised the Jew who was making possible his deliverance. Six thousand dollars, they had agreed, for the exact half of Velden without the house, perhaps one-fifth of what that half was worth; and for two weeks they had haggled over the payments. All gold, James Abbey insisted: all

greenbacks, the Jew contended, United States greenbacks as solid as granite. Gold? the Jew spat. Were there six thousand gold dollars in the Treasury at Washington?

The town of Hazelhurst swung in a mist round Abbey's eyes. The Jew was a repulsive frog croaking in a swamp. Abbey's fingers curved to fit a whip that should have lashed those sticky hands, that suave and saffron face. Nevertheless the Jew, who could make an Abbey bargain like a tavern-keeper, was not to be lashed but obeyed. Since Appomattox, yes, since Vicksburg, Abbey had understood that there was no way out of Velden—out of the South—out of defeat—save the Jew or one like him. While the froggy pop-eyes snapped their rapture, he agreed to take three-fourths of the blood-money in greenbacks, if the rest were gold. He bowed; the Jew bobbed, croaked, and went away. In a month—the money.

James Abbey realized that he had done his treason. Velden rose before his eyes, green acres of cotton, paler acres of tobacco, a house with pillars that were still white. Yes, his treason. He saw the remaining son of the Abbeyes, to whom he had given those white pillars and half of those green acres. He felt, impassive, the breath of his mother cursing her firstborn. The picture merged into a strange and quiet sunlight where there was no defeat, neither despair. That sunlight, he realized, was beyond the Mississippi, far beyond. It was the West.

A corporal and his squad were roaming about Hazelhurst. Part of a company sent down from Jackson to maintain order in Copiah County, they had

quietly suffered the abuse of women and graybeards; others, gentry or trash indifferently, they had clapped into their guardhouse. Today, Abbey supposed, their tempers must be short: a sentry had been clubbed the night before, whether by niggers, boys, or fools he had not learned. He refused to glance at them when they passed him, their muskets shiny. Behind them came a half-dozen niggers, boisterous, and a company of small boys. One nigger, drunk in the protection of his emancipators, was roaring a song. Its infantile obscenity had at last wearied the corporal. He halted his command and turned back.

"Git, you black boys," he ordered. "Where d'you belong at?"

They laughed. It was a glorious joke. "No'eres." The singer improvised their response into a new line for his chorus.

"Then you'll git to work," the corporal decided. "Joe, you run these black bastards down to the quartermaster. He can use 'em."

The singer reached out an arm to embrace the corporal. "Rum," he yelled. "Where do we get rum at, boss?"

"All savin' this'n, Joe," the corporal said.

Negligently, almost absent-mindedly, he swung the butt of his rifle into the negro's belly. The squad marched on, the small boys behind it dividing round the fallen black.

Abbey went on down the shaded road. One nigger taught one lesson for a minute. They learned quick, the Yanks. He had no quarrel with them. . . . That was why he was selling Velden: because he had no quarrel with them. That was why he was going West. He felt defenceless before eyes that might

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look at him through the closed shutters of Hazelhurst—they would be scorning a forsworn man, a traitor, a first-born Abbey, who had deserted the South when she was sinking. *Rat, rat, rat!* the word scorched in his mind, raised across pageantry of magnificent banners. If the South had admitted she was sinking, by God! he would not have gone. But the South lied, was blind, was imbecile and cursed. No tomorrow in Copiah County, no tomorrow with bigger armies coming down steel-tipped to protect the Jews; not even today with Illinois infantry roaming the streets—only the day before yesterday, seen through sunny clouds, and girls marching out of town with ignorant troops that draped jasmine on their muskets and hung Abe Lincoln from a sour-apple tree. Day before yesterday, Chancellorsville and a full tide, King Cotton, the First Mississippi Dragoons, *Dixie* and tears, tears and *Dixie*—day before yesterday.

A feeble piping reached his ears. Not *Dixie!* The tune invited its words in his memory.

We've borne the Yankee trickery,
The Yankee gibe and sneer,
Till Yankee insolence and pride
Know neither shame nor fear.
But ready now with shot and steel
Their brazen front to mar,
We'll rally round the Bonnie Blue Flag
That bears a single star.

Hurrah, Hurrah! For Southern rights hurrah!
We'll rally round the Bonnie Blue Flag. . . .

The flute of Ran Beauvais, the idiot. Ever since a bomb-proof had blown in on Ran at Port Hudson, he had been simple-minded. He knew nothing later than the bomb-proof: he but dimly understood that he was

back at Hazelhurst, and for the rest lived still in the early days of the war. Ran was standing by the hedge where Judge Bostrom's clapboarded walk ended and was tootling while the Judge talked with old Paraden, once his bailiff. Two white heads nodding in mutual anger, two white goatees fierce with some new, ridiculous defiance.

James Abbey's slow-moving mind roused to loathe the sight. An idiot tootling The Bonnie Blue Flag while two old men hated in unison. He looked away, resolved not to catch their glance. But Bostrom's reedy voice stopped him.

"You, James Abbey!" Bostrom moved through the gap in the hedge, Paraden with him, till his black-thorn cane felt the loam of the sidewalk. "I'm your father's oldest friend—will you see me shamed? Will you stand by and not lift a hand when you see me ordered about by a sniveling upstart in a blue shirt? God's name! Will even our wives be safe?—God's name, have they ever been since the first blue shirt came to Copiah County?"

Abbey got his slow voice into motion. "What's happened now, Judge?"

Paraden trembled with vicarious indignity. "The Judge has got to—that young devil ordered him to report every Monday to the captain at the guard-house. Him, Mr. Abbey, Judge Bostrom on his own place right here in Hazelhurst."

The Judge's goatee was tremulous. "Yes, James Abbey. I've been justice of the circuit court. I was in the convention that voted the State of Mississippi into the Confederacy. I've been chairman of the War Committee at Hazelhurst——"

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"That's why they're keeping tab on you," Abbey said.

"——ever since there was one. Will I go into the presence of a Yankee officer and take off my hat and bow down? Will I suffer him to ask me what I've done for a week past and who I've talked with and how often I've wiped my nose? By God, no!"

"You will, Judge. He'll send a squad for you, if you don't."

"Send a squad for Judge Bostrom?" Paraden was aghast.

"There's one man in Hazelhurst knows what use to put a pistol to." The Judge drew himself still more upright above his cane.

But Abbey was only contemptuous. "You'll do what you're told. You'll snap your heels and salute. You'll kiss the corporal's boots if he says to. You, too, Paraden—and all the rest. They can do anything they want—hitch you to a plow, maybe, and let a nigger drive you with a club."

"There's a thousand men in Copiah County that——"

"Say there is, Judge. Say you get a thousand fools to back you up. They'll bring ten thousand troops. Get ten thousand and they'll have a hundred thousand. Open your eyes, Judge, learn sense. Do what they say, make everybody else do it, bow them round like a flogged nigger—till they get a bellyful of lordin' it over us, and get out and leave us alone."

"They say," Paraden's watery eyes lightened, "they say thousands and thousands are gathering just over the Rio Grande. They say they'll come 'cross Texas like a whirlwind, grab New Orleans——"

"Oh, God," Abbey moaned, "won't you never learn? Is the whole South——"

A young woman was crossing the road from the newly painted Martin place—the opulent house that Joseph Martin, because of his traitorous businesses in Richmond, had been able to maintain grandly. She was Susan Haines, whose family the war had all but annihilated. Father, brothers, and lover Sue Haines had lost to the Confederacy. Her father's warehouses stood empty and his slaves had run off. Now her sister and her mother kept within doors, resolved to starve if they could find no dignified way of accepting charity. But Susan had outlawed herself by taking service with the profiteer, as governess of the Martin children—and Joseph Martin had hoarded gold.

She brushed past them on her way to see Grandmother Bostrom, her cheeks pale as they had been ever since word came that young Wallace Bostrom was reported missing somewhere in the vicinity of Perryville. But Ran Beauvais, who was still blowing happily on his flute, swept off his hat and called after her.

"What do you hear from Wallace, Miss Susan?" he asked genially. "Bound to be home on furlough right soon, I'd judge."

She stumbled as Abbey had seen men trip with a bullet in their lungs, then caught herself and ran into the house. Bostrom turned on Ran Beauvais, who was smiling after her.

"My, my," Ran said, "it surely warms a man's heart when two old friends are that much took with each other. She'll ride miles out of town to meet Wallace when he comes home. Officer, now, too——"

ain't he, Judge? Him and Bragg, they'll go through Buell clean on to Cleveland."

"Ran," the Judge said, "won't you learn anything? My boy's boy—he's been dead these three years. Don't talk about him to Sue Haines. The good Lord knows, if ever a girl's heart was broke——"

"How you talk, Judge!" Ran humored the old man's oddities. "Don't I know Wallace? He'll be home sure by Christmas. Him and Miss Susan be married in a few months, if they ain't right this minute."

James Abbey's simmering fury boiled over. "You roarin' at Ran Beauvais, Judge! What's the difference between him and you? Ran lost his brains fighting, that's all. Ran don't know Wally Bostrom got killed three years ago. Well, what do you know? You don't know we're whipped. You don't know there never was a chance we'd be anything else. You don't know we were whipped the minute we started. You don't know it don't matter either way now. No, you stand here and listen to this poor cracked fool play The Bonnie Blue Flag and you and him fight an army that's whipped you plumb—and wish we'd won Gettysburg, Vicksburg, Antietam—tell Paraden and all the other fools that'll listen that you'll fight on till you die—only first you'll drive the invader off the sacred soil of Dixie, the noblest land that ever drew sword——"

"James Abbey," the Judge intoned, "James Abbey, I would let no man speak a word against the nation I've served. No man, James, while I've a cane to silence him with. And when a man who leaves the South to die—sells the lands of his father—abandons his mother, the widow of a hero——" tears had

reached the orator's eyes. He finished pitifully, "Is it true you're going West?"

"I'm going West."

"A dog will stay beside a dying man. You're leaving us to die while the murderer rifles our coat. And I say, such a traitor would defile the spittle of a man that cursed him. May I never touch your hand." Splendidly the Judge's cane, like a prophet's wand, curved defiance and denunciation, but his legs wobbled, failing its support.

Abbey rumbled on. "I stayed with you while you were dying. Four wounds, Judge, and you never heard a ball singin' by. I'd stay if there was dying. But you're not dying, you're only a pack of fools lookin' backward over your shoulder, while some that ain't fools rob you of what's left. If you'd wake up—if you'd own you're whipped, and forget the vile invader and the Bonnie Blue Flag—I'd stay, Judge. Oh, I'd stay if there was anything but fools, but I can't abide a fool. You stay here and report to the corporal—I'm going West."

He felt power in him like a pitch fire, like the boiler of a racing steamboat. Anger burned with that clear, that irresistible flame. The Judge, the whole South, was a dwarf whose frantic hands could not reach to his knee. But Bostrom and Paraden looked at each other through tears, weak old men of emaciated hearts.

Bostrom tapped the hedge with his cane. Failing a curse fitted to the man, he had only lamentation. "You'd a-better died in battle, James Abbey. Like your father and your brother, like my son's son. They never lived to see an Abbey disgrace his name and betray his country. I could have respected you if you had died——"

Sue Haines had returned from her errand in the house, and, on her way through the gate, had heard him. It was four years since she had walked beside Wallace Bostrom when the infantry went singing toward the river. The tensions of those four years gave way at the Judge's words. She threw herself on him, shaking him as one shakes a stubborn child.

"You're glad he died!" She had shaken his old hat into the dust. "He was your grandson, and you're proud he's dead instead of here. You never had a bullet in your lungs. It was you killed Wallace and you're proud you did."

His head bobbed like a cork. Her hair—it had lost its luster these three years—fell down over her cheeks and hid the tears that mottled them. She cursed him—and all old men, all men everywhere who had never felt their flesh ploughed by lead—old men great and proud because they had sons to kill.

"Stand here and be glad because your grandson is dead. I'd like to see you dead—killed like Wallace, like James Abbey's brother. If I could drive a team across your grave! Only I'll die first if I don't get away from you."

Paraden, at last roused from astonishment, was reaching for her when she weakened and let go. Abbey caught her and she drooped against him. He raised her face till the hair fell away from her tear-blemished cheeks, and he saw her eyelids tremble and close. She shuddered. He lifted her in his arms and carried her across the dusty road to the Martin's.

James Abbey's wife had died, childless, two years before the war. That part of life he had put away,

that ecstasy could in no wise revisit him. The war had not killed his youth, for youth was buried with Sophia Abbey under the oaks at Velden. James Abbey was not one to understand or explain himself: this finality meant to him only that Sophia was dead and he was no longer young. He had no phrase to mean that April had perished in his heart.

When he now came to think of Sue Haines, he saw that for her, too, April ecstasy was over. That was right. He did not think of Sue and him as lovers. Carrying her in his arms, he had been surprised to find her young and round, and, remembering, he was troubled by a faint sense of impropriety. Who was he to experience or to think of a woman's softness?

Young love he could not give her, nor ask of her. But he could give her passage from the South—deliverance. And she could give him a strength he had not hoped to find, of shared detestation and contempt. The fierceness of his hope, turning toward her, was evidence of his need. They two—they saw the South as it was, and only they two in all the South. For them, together, there was a door opening out of darkness, opening westward. He could no longer think of the West save as it mingled with Susan, intense and desperate and strong. The very West willed them together.

"Are you going West, James?" she had asked him, even before he had set her down. When he nodded her cheeks seemed even whiter than before.

Had it been with her as whispers said? as with so many during the first year of the war? Young men marching away, and girls proud of them and eager and nobly generous—had Wallace Bostrom taken more than Sue Haines had ever given to any one or

could ever give again? For hours James Abbey was tormented by the question. Could he marry a woman who had given herself in sin? He remembered young Bostrom, all fine things no Abbey had ever been, eloquent and gracious and gay. He remembered Sue in '61, as lovely as a June dawn, and now quite lifeless. He hoped she had.

He saw her again when he next went to meet the Jew in Hazelhurst. Though pale as ever, she seemed stronger, more assured. When she spoke to him and met his eyes he saw that she, too, had been thinking. He liked that. She had seen the South as it was and now she did not fail to recognize in him a way out of it. She was desperate and brave—a woman whom a man, desperate and brave, might take West with him.

So that it was not long till the old Haines mansion saw James Abbey not so much making love as offering freedom. He did it awkwardly: he was an awkward, a poor-spoken man. He came with such ceremony as he might, shined clean in old broadcloth, uncertain, elaborate. She met him in her best, in a room where no life had been during the four years. He tried to find words of tenderness and hope, but words had never served his will and would not now. What he said seemed to mean nothing. He faltered. He shook himself, and then——

“Would you want to come West with me, Susan?” he asked.

At once he was in agony, shamed. Not a word of marriage, and she knew he had heard what was whispered about her. She would scorn him for a blunderer and a fool—rightly. But once the blunder had been made, he could not choke out a word about

marriage. It seemed a long time before he saw by the omens in her cheeks that she would answer him.

"I'll marry you, James."

She could not meet his gaze beyond the instant of assent. Austerity fell away from her and for a moment she was a girl trembling at her betrothal. For another moment she closed her eyes on tears, and then she faced him. Her hands sought a chair for support and she half began to wave him out of the room. But she straightened.

"My mother will not see me married, James," she said. "No one will."

Nor his. Her distress, he knew dimly, was somehow justified, somehow inevitable and rooted in the way of things. He did not understand it; he supposed he never would. Only, it was right and true—and beyond his help.

"But will you—will we go right away?" she answered his nod still more gravely. "How far, James?"

"Till we've reached a place where we'll never hear of the South again."

That was as much as he knew, as much as his desire had asked. California, Oregon, Utah, Pike's Peak, the Rocky Mountains—he and she needed oblivion, not names. He saw that she was content. She gave him her hand, he touched his lips to her forehead, and their pledge was solemnized. At the touch, his pulses throbbed with a sudden desire to kiss her as one should kiss the girl who was to marry him. But he remembered that passion and young love were altogether alien to this marrying. Besides, she had trembled and he had seen her eyes desperate with the memory of one, not James Abbey, who would not kiss her ever again.

But day by day his veins ran a Spring flood of power that could not be withstood. He felt young, irresistible, impatient for the West he was to master. It was a heritage, this vast energy, that would be bequeathed to the children of Sue Haines—out beyond the river in that country of chance. . . . An August morning came. He hitched two scrawny horses to a wagon there had been no iron to mend. He had loaded it the night before: a carefully hidden carbine, his blankets and clothes, the strong-box boarded over in the false bottom of a tool-chest. He climbed to the rickety seat and, a sharp pain at his heart, looked at the stately, half-tumbled-in portico of Velden. There was no sign of his mother, none of his widowed or his married sister, none of the brother to whom he had made over an exact half of the estate. God blast them utterly! He might have sold Velden over their heads, satisfied the Jew, and turned westward with twice the sum in the false bottom. What had he in return for dealing fairly by them? Sneers from his sisters, hatred from the brother he had not disinherited, and from his mother an old woman's contempt.

The night before, after hours of trying to find words for what he must say, he had marched desperately to her room—to which, feebly disconsolate, she had kept increasingly for a year. He found her in bed and confronted her, all but burnt up within. He meant to be forbearing and tender. Even as the words reached his lips, he expected them to be gentle, the words of an eldest son. But they came from between set teeth in the voice of a man face to face with an enemy.

"I'd like for you to say good-bye to me," he commanded.

Weakness had somewhat corroded her serenity. Even in sickness, race showed in her like a potter's mark, but the grief that had shrunk her cheeks had sapped at her control till she could show hatred.

"I would close your coffin over you," she said distinctly, "but God would let me die before I would take the hand of a traitor. Don't keep me looking at a son I despise."

There was no sign that anyone at Velden knew that James Abbey, head of the house, was going away from it for ever. He saw a shutter at his mother's window hanging by one hinge, but no one moved behind the window and no one looked out from it. Was his going away not worth the flutter of a handkerchief?

Then God damn them all! He slapped the reins upon the horses' backs.

The unkempt, yellowing fields of his estate flowed past on either side. He was born of their soil, they were the blood and tissue of him, and a great love of this land burned hot in him, forsaking it. The land that he was, that was all of him! He gazed ahead of him, breathless for a turn in the road that would shut out his land and bring him, for all time, to land that had not shaped his body.

At Hazelhurst, an hour past noon, he found Susan at her gate, sitting on the small box that held her possessions. She was pale from scenes such as he had left, but beneath her pallor was an excitement that transformed her. Nothing could bring back lustre to her hair or laughter to her eyes, and the future she had accepted held no certainty of anything but desperation, but for the moment youth looked back on her from the hilltop whence it was to disappear.

The justice of the peace was waiting for them,

drowsy from the heat, his hair and goatee newly smoothed, his coat rumpled. His wife and daughter came to give the marriage its at best doubtful legality. That doubt tormented Abbey. What Andrew Johnson and his enemies were doing, what rumor added to it, what had already been done to field-officers of the defeated armies, left him ignorant whether he had any status at all under the government. It might be that the lands he had sold had not been his to sell—the Jew had made his bargain on that risk. And this justice, who held his office under a rebel government that did not exist, had he any right to join them in marriage? The children of James Abbey and Susan Haines, would they be bastards?

He looked at Sue, whose gaze was firm on the sleepy official, who seemed to hear in his slow questions the voice of the future. His glance strayed from her intent face out to the sycamores of Hazelhurst, blanketed with heat. This was behind them forever: the West shone in his mind, a light over green fields that, sewn with streams of water, stretched far out to kindly mountains tipped with snow. He turned back to Sue, whose tenseness relaxed as the justice closed his book. She leaned toward him, lifting her arms. Sue Haines was Mrs. Abbey.

He swung her to the seat behind the team; the heat assailed her so that she loosened the collar about her throat. With pincers and a stone he tightened the wire that held on the most precarious of the four tires, then climbed up beside her. When he picked up the reins another wave of power swept through him. He was strong. He had begun what no man could halt. . . . Sue also was carried beyond reticence. Her hands were suddenly hot and tight on his; her

cheeks had flowered and light had revisited her eyes.

"James, James!" she was saying. "Are we really going? Then we can live—still—after all!"

Where was Judge Bostrom—Paraden—Ran Beauvais—all the wasting spectres of the South? He could have broken them in his fingers. He could have swept aside, with one hand, all the defeat and degradation of the lost nation.

"You can forget Mississippi, Susan," he told her. "Forget everything. Don't ever dream about it at night—throw it away and go on. Out West we'll both be new in a country that don't know anything we know. All our life we'll never see the South again."

Five minutes before nothing could have moved her to ignore what she was and had been born—but now Sue Abbey flung her arms round her husband, in broad afternoon, in the public road, and laid her cheek against his and gave him her strangely eager lips. And in broad afternoon, James held her to him while power surged an octave higher in his heart.

Neither Bostrom nor Paraden was there but when he lifted his head from her kiss, he saw over her shoulder a negro leaning against a pin-oak and staring at them. A gigantic nigger, as tall as Abbey, his lips drawn back into a leer over discolored teeth. A freed-man, as good as these whites, better than them—who had been whipped. The nigger slapped an enormous hand against his thighs.

"Jesus!" he guffawed, "oh, Jesus Christ!"

Abbey sprang from the seat. The nigger ran, but, that moment, nothing on earth could have escaped James Abbey. He caught the quarry in a dozen strides, with one hand swung him off the ground, and with the other struck him twice in the face. He pitched

him into the dust, to lie there howling, his nose crushed and his teeth broken. He walked back to the wagon, alone in eternity. His lungs could hardly contain his mighty breath. His blood had forced the last barrier. He had severed the last tie that held him to the defeated South: he had hit a nigger with his naked fist.

They drove down the red-clay road, through the haze of August heat. With them in a few bundles they carried all they had saved from ruin, and their backs were turned on the only life they had ever known, a life they had repudiated. Ahead of them was nothing they could imagine in any terms. But they were driving toward the West and already James Abbey's mind had crossed the great river to the new land where he would build up the Abbey greatness. Busy with those sun-swept distances, he had nothing to say; and Sue at his side was silent, though he knew that her thoughts too had gone on to the prairies.

They had no words to give their visions form and the ramshackle wagon they traveled in was but a grotesque setting for ecstasy. But, silently but very surely, they felt that the westward road would end only at some place where the South and the past would be for ever out of mind—that, facing the river and the unknown West beyond it, they were leaving death for life, defeat for triumph, slavery for freedom.

At a steamboat landing they sold the horses and wagon to the Freedman's Bureau for enough to pay their passage to St. Louis. There they were appalled by the news that they could not start West till Spring. Jim could have gone with freighters, or they could have foregone buying stores and embarked, at a tremendous price, on the uncertain journey with the stages; but if they wanted to select their own destination, be sure of getting there, and take an outfit with them, they must wait till the caravans formed in the Spring.

They settled down in a waterfront boarding-house, and Susan began to make clothes for the journey. After four war-years, she was dazzled to find cloth so easily available and so cheap. Ten greenback dollars would have clad her mother and sister for another war. She stitched away at shirts and underwear for Jim, heavy flannel stuff that she hoped would endure on the plains, and no less coarse garments for herself. After the new year, she began to cut out smaller garments. At first she did not tell James that she was pregnant, lest fear for her keep him from starting overland. But he guessed, and grew only the more resolved that his child should be born in the West.

James found work, trucking like a nigger on the wharves. Irish roustabouts swore at him. Niggers joked with him. Foremen jerked him by the shoulders and ordered him about. Daily he held himself back

from knocking them down. He writhed and grew sullen under the necessity of control, but he must preserve intact the store of gold in the false-bottom.

By March he was haunting every lounging-place where up-river news might be encountered. The first week in April they took passage to Atchison and, disembarking, were swept into the fever of the Western rush. Touts dragged James to saddlers, to drovers, to outfitters; quarreled for his patronage; filled his ears with rumor and advice. Strange-garbed men drew him into their groups and bid for his enlistment in their trains. On all sides caravans were gathering round scattered centers of tents, white-tops, hobbled horses, squealing oxen, vast piles of fodder. Everywhere men were shouting against each other—or fighting—or drinking—or debating the myriad necessities of the trip.

The saloons rang with condemnation of the government. "Moved the mail-route from the Platte to the Smoky Hill Fork. Why, damn me, sir, the Sioux and the Cheyennes will cut 'em down like grass. We've licked 'em on the Platte. We've got it into the lousy head of every Indian on the trail that the Platte route is white—damn bad medicine for an Indian. Sure as you're born, that's the minute the Government picks to shift the mail to a desert trail in the heart, yes sir, the heart of the buffalo country. The mail will take every sutler and station-owner with it. What will Spotted Dog think of that? What will Roman Nose do to a mail that runs into his hunting parties? No, sir, keep to the Platte if you don't see a soul till you touch salt water. By heaven, sir, God made fools, but the devil made politicians."

Go by the Platte route, for safety! Go by Smoky


Hill Fork, and have protection! Spotted Dog had massacred three stage-stations. Black Hawk had burned four mail stages in a day. Roman Nose had wiped out a trader's party under the very guns of Fort Leavenworth. From the Missouri to the Columbia the Indians were up. There was new gold at Pike's Peak. Don't take horses, for the grass was scant this year. Sell your Colts and buy Smith and Wessons, the sweetest gun ever offered a traveler. The buffalo were ranging northward along the Platte. Fill your sacks with *pinole* for you'd get no meat along the way. Spotted Dog had—the Smoky Hill Fork—cholera along the river—Indians up—better trains forming at Fort Leavenworth.

"No, by God," one captain said, "you can't travel with me. Spit that Johnny Reb talk at copperheads if you can find 'em."

And from a train that did accept him, he marched out, after he had knocked down a man who jeered at him for a rebel.

Prices soared, before the rush of emigrants, till they sounded like Confederate money. Two saddlers had cornered all the leather-goods within a hundred miles; till another steamboat broke the monopoly, harness was literally worth its weight in gold. James paid more for a Conestoga than he had expected the entire trip to cost. Flour, buckskin, buffalo robes, salt pork, rice, coffee, sugar, gunpowder—all the essential stores of the journey ate remorselessly at his hoarded gold. But he bought them with a feverish intensity, half mad to be on the way.

He scoured the town for seedlings. "I want little trees," he explained. "Oaks and maples and sycamores and gum-trees. You'll have to wrap the roots



in sacking. I want to take a bundle of them with me."

Storekeepers guffawed at him. "Little trees? Great God, man, you movin' West with trees?"

He glared his wrath at them, but there were no trees. "Go dig 'em on the river," they told him. He did so, but along the river he found only cottonwoods. Several evenings he tramped back to the wagon, where they now slept, with bundles of seedlings. Susan, uncomprehending, wrapped their roots as she was told.

"They'll only die, James," she said. "You ought to dig them up in the Fall. When the sap's running, they won't last. They'll die anyway when we get away from water. What do you want with them?"

He stared at her. Couldn't she see? "For the house," he said.

They were outfitted at last. The Conestoga was loaded with a ton and a half of tools and food and household goods. A thousand pounds of fodder was heaped atop the load, where the bed should have been spread, close under the double canvas top. Five yoke of oxen, another yoke for replacements, four cows, two horses, a crate of chickens, a shepherd dog that was probably half-coyote. It was a rich man's outfit, one to be stared at by the humbler emigrants. They came and lounged about, poking over all the details, cheerfully asking prices, assuring him that he had been swindled. They were puzzled by his coldness; they could not see why they should be rebuffed.

"Rich Johnny Reb," a voice floated out of the twilight. "Goin' West on somebody's plate. Hell, Sherman didn't range wide enough to get *him*, I'd guess." James leaped out, but could find no one.

He joined a train that was forming for upper Cali-

fornia, and then torrential rains turned the prairies into swamps. The captain and the mountaineer who had been hired as a guide refused to budge. Abbey stormed at them but had only sneers in return. Let him put side-wheels on his team and a boiler on his wagon and hayfoot out in a boat. Word reached him that a train for Oregon was forming at Plattsmouth and he set out for it with his cavayard. He lost a cow on the way, but in five days he was at Plattsmouth and had joined the train. The rain stopped. There was hammering of casks, a vast bustle and outcry of preparation: tomorrow they were off.

By firelight they gathered to elect officers. Half a dozen Mormon families who had missed the Church train ten days before; five wagons of Presbyterian missionaries for Oregon; a dozen Union veterans with their wives and sons, for the free lands they had been granted; a group of thirty fanatical communists from Wisconsin; traders, hunters, freighters, bums—all told, the owners of seventy wagons shouted round Niobrara Frank Moss, the old trapper who had been hired to guide them. They roared and laughed and argued. Aspirants for the captaincy gathered files of adherents behind them, bidding in terms of whisky. From competitive joviality, the debate became angry. The electorate doubled its fists and stepped a foot outward. Niobrara Frank squatted and sifted pebbles in his hand.

A lanky Mormon shouted down the uproar for a moment, mounted a barrel, and pointed at Abbey. "Elect him. Take this-yer Abbey for captain. Look at them shoulders. Have a look at them hands. He could lick the whole damn train. He could gut a Cheyenne with one kick."

A confused roar answered him. Abbey scowled but the sound of his name on the crowd's lips deeply pleased him. But one of the discharged soldiers elbowed his drunken way to the Mormon's barrel.

"Elect this Abbey? Abbey ain't nobody but a Johnny Reb and he can't lie out of it, neither. I'd say he ain't deservin' hardly to jine us and travel along respectful. Gents, you don't want a Mormon pickin' out your captain. Where was Brigham Young when the war come? You know and so do I—shut up in his harem sendin' out spies to stir up the Indians to help the Rebs. Massacrein' Union soldiers and officers along the trail. Bustin' the Union open if he could. I say, don't have no dealin's with a Johnny and don't have no dealin's with a Mormon."

During the battle that followed Abbey stood impassive beside the wagon-wheel, his hand closed tight on the concealed butt of his new Smith and Wesson. He need not have bothered. It was a purely ritualistic combat, the Mormons and the bluecoats pounding each other dispassionately, for the sake of the fight. In the end, one of the Union men was unanimously elected. No more was said about Abbey.

"Let them alone," he told Susan. "They're common—common swine. Keep to ourselves and don't let them more than speak to us. We'll not have to suffer them forever."

At noon the next day they formed in four parallel columns, and a thin dust above the prairies meant one more train in motion toward the West. Up the Platte another wandering, through the ancient gateway to the sunset. The prairies shone with delicate new green, when James Abbey's pilgrimage began, and the willows were reddening along the river.

Up the Platte. Westward, the new country, the house of Sun-goes-down, a land of legend and victory. Over the rim. The horizon-country. Idaho and Oregon, Utah and California, Florence, Virginia City, American River, the Comstock Lode, Helena, the Caleveras. Gold, silver, lumber, land—land most of all, the new chance, the equality of the baseborn raised to proprietors. Land for everyone—for the Abbeyes forgetfulness also, but chiefly land. Visions of uncounted acres were in his mind, and James Abbey riding across them as he had ridden Velden in the old days.

He trudged beside his oxen, at the front when his turn came, at the rear when he must be. At night he slept under the wagon or by Susan's side on the stores within, or he mounted guard when his name was called and walked about under the near-by prairie stars, peering into the darkness for rustle or movement of Indians. After supper fires blazed within the circle of interlocked wagons. There was singing, dancing, charades: young men and girls wandered away into the darkness: their parents watched the fires burn down to embers and swapped tales of the country they were journeying toward. They heard about the everlasting snows, the summer drouths, the marvels along the headwaters of the Yellowstone: their speech filled with strange words, grizzly, canyon, mustang, irrigation, medicine lodge. They heard the already ancient sagas of the West: Hugh Glass's grizzly, Fitzpatrick's ride, Beale and the California gold, the Mormons and Joe Johnston, Jim Bridger's lies, Kit Carson and Shunar, Whitman's ride to save Oregon, Jim Beckwourth the white chief. The land, which had been empty of meaning, began to fill with heroic figures.

Mornings and evenings, Susan went about to the other wagons, trading lore with the old wives, trying to staunch her fear of the approaching August. But James kept apart. He mended his harness, tightened the bolts and tires of his wagon, cleaned his guns, and glowered at the emigrants beside the fires. He performed the duties that were allotted him, guarding the herd or flanks or hunting game, but in no other wise would he mingle with the train. He was removed from such as they eternally.

"Let them be," he said when Susan protested. "They're not our kind. I won't try to be theirs. Pretty soon we'll be by ourselves."

His word was final and though she liked their simple fellowship, she tried to avoid them; but the women were too garrulous and prying, too interested in the child she was carrying, too kind. They ignored his coldness and kept up their care of her.

The new land was overwhelming. For the first few hundred miles it was a land of rounded slopes, shining sluggish rivers, waist-deep grass that fattened cattle as they marched. A land of Spring, with meadow-larks singing from the willows, immeasurable flocks of ducks and geese and brant going by overhead, plover whistling from underfoot, and herons stalking down the million rivulets of the hills. A lush land, a land dripping fatness. Abbey trod it gladly, sometimes singing gruffly, sometimes listening to the songs that floated along the caravan above the creak of drying axles, the snuffing of oxen, the dogs and cows and drivers vocal together. But Susan was silent. This vastness oppressed her; this illimitable emptiness wakened formless apprehension in her breast.

Gradually the land flattened into a monotony of

level spaces covered with shorter grass. The streams narrowed, grew less frequent, began to carry a faint taste of brine. Sand showed between the bunches of sparser grass. They were halted by another week of rains more violent than Abbey had ever seen, that beat through the doubled canvas tops as if through cheese-cloth. And then, when they could resume their way, the days grew intolerably hot and for the first time the wide trail was dusty. There was no escaping that dust. The slow hooves of the oxen stirred it into a cloud that hung level above the train. Drivers walked through it all day long, bandannas bound across their mouths. At sunset it still hung over the camp, turning to a mist of fire. No one sang any more; quarrels broke out. One wakened in the morning unrefreshed; one yoked up the oxen in a sullen weariness. And the days were bearing on toward Susan's time; James looked at the western sky and wondered how he could bring her through.

And now the country broke up again, this illimitable land, this land of interminable distances and sun, into sand hills rust-red and bare, dry as Gomorrah, empty of leaves. Red and pathless they were, desolate as doomsday, with mirages flickering among them, and always the dispassionate sun. A wind began to blow from the West, a tireless wind that was not violent but only moaned all day and flayed what skin the sun and dust had spared. The wagons dried out, and the harness, till each outfit made its own chorus as it plowed along. Cows went dry; there was no milk and only what butter a few had melted and sewed up in goatskins weeks before. Oxen grew thin, and their eyes, once harassed by the mosquitoes of the prairies, now shrank in their red sockets and were filled with

myriads of small black flies. Children cried by day and night. Women cried, too, without knowing why. Men cursed easily, and fought each other over the tying of a trace.

Chimney Rock vanished behind them. Scott's Bluff followed it eastward. The widely rutted trail bent sensibly upward. Patches of snow-like dust began to smear the barren ground. They were now well into the alkali, into the Great American Desert that sprawled across the map of Western America. This, too, was a new land, and this, too, was big beyond all conception. A big land, subject to the sun, echoless as all the distances of eternity, and cursed of God. There had the great owl made her nest and laid and hatched and gathered under her shadow. There the satyr cried to his fellow and the screech-owl rested, and the vultures gathered together.

By the sagebrush and the cactus and the prairie-dog should this land be known forevermore, that trinity of sparse lives that abode in the desert. The sage was everywhere, green and purple and saffron but mostly gray, a drab illimitable sea rocking before the wind, empty as despair. In the dawn it was a perfume, but by noon it stank. One's head swooned with it, and all the plain vibrated with little lines of heat that ran along its branches. Sage, the artemisia whose leaves were once thought to bring hearts-ease.

At noon, one day, the tire from one of Abbey's rear wheels fell clanking to the ground. The fellow must now be inlaid with strips of whittled wood and the tire heated red and reset over it. So much had the rising altitude done, as well as bring hysterical tears to Susan's eyes, and so much it had done to many other wagons in the train. Several oxen had drunk alkali

waters, swelled, and died. Horses had gone mad. One by one every wagon in the train had cast out ballast, chests, furniture, stores. A man had wandered away by night and though the emigrants halted for a day and scoured the land they could not find him. A boy fell from the wagon box and rolled under the wheels; in spite of crushed hips he lived for three days. A scratch on one driver's wrist, which would have healed in an hour a few weeks before, mortified and swelled till his arm was the thickness of a sapling. A woman suddenly began to scream that Indians were scalping her, and tried constantly to leap out and run away; they ended by tying her wrists and tethering her with a rope to a wagon-end by night.

Susan grew terrified. This immensity seemed somehow bound up with the end of the world. She had few conscious thoughts, few reveries. By day she sat on the wagon-seat, where there was intolerable sun but where some air came through the metallic dust. She merely sat and waited for the child to leap in her womb, and to fear that she would bring it forth to die. And by night, under the globed stars that were almost at finger's end, she listened to the barking of coyotes and the squealing of cattle, and heard in them and in the wind's moan the coming of that Indian attack that was to kill her baby. The child's stirrings no longer brought her any ecstasy at all; they merely meant a hostage to the desert.

James would try to smile at her through the dust, by day. At nooning or when the sage fires were blazing by night he would sit by her, take her in his lap, smooth his corrugated fingers across her cheeks. His only comfort was "It won't get so bad we can't hang on."

She would only hold him to her in fright. "Oh, James, will we get there? Tell me I'll live. Tell me he'll live."

His dirty, sun-swarthy cheeks would seem to sink still more. The vertical wrinkle between his eyes, the crest of the house of Abbey, would deepen like a fissure in red rock. "We've got to stand it, honey. Hang on and see it through. If we stand fast enough—if we hang on. . . ."

At last Fort Laramie, which meant a week's rest, sweet water, long days flat on one's back on the earth—pending the worse stretch ahead. Now came Niobrara Frank Moss, the trapper, to James Abbey secretly by night and led him off into the darkness.

"Three weeks longer than we'd ought to of been," said Niobrara Frank. "And you listen to me, Jim——" Abbey had grown used to this profanation of his name—"we got worse ahead than we've struck yet."

"How much?" Jim's mind traveled ahead to Susan's child.

"You ain't had nothin' but a sparkin' party," Frank assured him. "Wait'll you see the crossings of the Snake—or the Blues. Wait'll you see the Dry Drive, or the lava ayant Fort Hall." Frank cursed by name all the deposed captains of the train. "I never seen worse management. A body'd do right to quit 'em cold. That's what I want now. If I say the word they'll make you Captain, like you'd ought to of been. If we're goin' to get 'em safe through to Oregon, you got to do it, Jim."

Even a month ago Jim's pride would have fastened on the tribute. But he had passed beyond pride now. He would not barter with those who had rejected him.

He shook his head, and then, perceiving that the refusal could not be seen, growled "No."

"Yes you will," Frank roared. "They'll be starvin' to death. They'll be shootin' each other. And by God we maybe got through the Soos but there's Crows and Cheyennes and Bannocks and Utes and Snakes to come. They need a man to knock 'em down, if need be. I need a man to back up what I say. Do you hanker to see 'em starvin'—or caught in the snow on the Cascades?"

But no cursing or argument could move him. They had had their chance; to hell with them.

They had reached the Big Spring only three days beyond Laramie, when the train split open. Should they keep to the old trail, and make Fort Hall, or should they make for the abandoned stage-road and follow it through Bridger Pass and Fort Bridger to the City of the Saints and thence straight north? Or should they, as some freethinkers proposed, abandon the trails altogether, and by a series of short-cuts, cut-offs, and dry drives make their own route? For two days they harangued one another, while Niobrara Frank cursed and threatened and finally abandoned them. Half a dozen wagons pulled out along the old route; a few hours later as many more pounded heavily after them. The greater part of the rest yoked up for the abandoned stage-route through Bridger Pass, but Abbey threw in with the dozen experimenters who, in spite of drouth and Indians and wilderness, would make their own way. He knew nothing about passes and cut-offs; he had no idea whether the way was better or worse than the one they had come; but they swore that they would beat the others into Fort Hall. And

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Susan's time was hard upon her; he prayed that it would delay until they reached Fort Hall.

They plunged into desolation. Dust was dry steam about them. The sky turned nickel-white with an orange sun swinging down its arc, a sun that blistered red rock and alkali earth. There was no water but foul and stinking springs from which one had to beat the oxen with goads. White brilliance glimmered from alkali patches everywhere amid the tumbled wreckage of the hills. By noonday and sunset flat blue lakes of mirage lay just above the horizon, but all day long only the stench of sage and alkali dust still further dried one's horny tongue. . . . Day after day, hunting rock-pockets for melted snow, digging through dried mud to reach the leprous water that might be underneath. Within a week they knew that they were lost. The wagons huddled together while men and boys abandoned them and rode out in all directions for some sign of trail. Then another start, with dried axles shrieking and the oxen bubbling from thirst, another day's drive to further repetitions of bare hills and alkali and scorching wind—and the realization that no trail had been found.

He must go through with it. That was the only awareness Jim Abbey had—running his coarsened hand across his untrimmed, alkali-matted beard. Endure! . . . something insisted that all things could be endured. He tried to explain that men must endure because they were men, but Sue, who in spite of her pregnancy was thin and worn and drunk with weariness, only shuddered and rebelled. She knew nothing of *must*; she only wondered whether she could live.

One wagon went to pieces; the oxen of another, progressively eked out with cows and horses, at last

stampeded by night, drank alkali-water, swelled, and died. Families and goods were heaped upon the overburdened, weakening outfits of others and the train staggered on to one more false trail. The oldest son of an Iowa family was bitten by a rattlesnake and died raving and discolored. Then suddenly a strange fever struck them all: they were enfeebled and delirious, they were agonized by bloody fluxes, they fell into a stupor, and five of them died. . . . God's personal intervention, Jim felt sure, kept the infection from Susan. She was too weak, however, to help him when his head and bones were wrenched by it. For a day he succumbed, then drove himself to nurse and comfort others. He bathed their foreheads with stinking water, poured spoonfuls of it down their throats, held them when delirium had them fighting Indians. One man, of the disrupted Wisconsin communism, died in his arms. Jim laid him out, folded his arms, and pulled shut the staring eyes. He wandered out from the stench of death, in the focussed sunlight, to the stench of sage and alkali and sulphuretted water. This, too, must be endured. A man might die, but while he lived he must not be broken.

They left five graves behind them, filled with stones to keep them inviolate from beasts; the ground trampled above them and charred remnants of fire all about to hide them from Indians. Panic and desperation set in. The next few days were not separable from delirium, a succession of thirst and strain and terror. . . . Till at last they topped one more rise, indistinguishable from a thousand others, and saw a wide, bare ribbon of dust stretching westward. They had found the trail again.

They reached a river of cold, clear water, flowing

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through a valley of sweet grass and cottonwoods. They rested for a day but were goaded on, finding that no rest refreshed them, fearing death or worse from delay. They noticed that the infrequent trickles of water they passed were flowing westward. The East was left behind and here under that nickel sky on the plaster-white earth, the West began. They were too jaded to rejoice.

They had crossed the Sandy and bent northward through still more ruthless desert when, an hour or two before noon, Susan half rose from her bed of tarpaulins and blankets laid out on boxes. She began to scream. The train was now so small that it could not divide; if one stopped all must stop. They formed, perfunctorily, a small circle of defence, and drove into it what little herd was left. Friends ran to unyoke Jim's oxen and bring whatever they might think helpful. The women surrounded her, till the wisest chose a young wife for assistant and drove the rest away.

She was clinging for life to Jim's hand. . . . That morning a dust-storm had seemed likely, one more plague for their lost souls. It had missed them, but far above the hills it still hung like a purple curtain and gave a sulphurous yellow tinge to the white plain. The sun made its way across a steel-white sky. Heat-mirage vibrated along the rutted trail, shimmered above the knee-deep dust, turned every horizon to a flowing ribbon. On all sides, nothing but sage and alkali and silence under a bursting sun.

This, too, could be gone through, this too defeated. . . . Could she live? Could either of them live? . . . This was James Abbey's firstborn. They were on the Western slope, no East or South any-

where, only the West. Thank God the child had held its coming till the South was gone. . . . Whatever it must meet, whatever it must endure, the South was no part of it. Through a rent in the canvas he caught a glimpse of the West—this land of sage and alkali and cactus, this dwelling place of prairie dogs and rattlesnakes and lean coyotes.

An hour before sunset, while riders came in on nerveless ponies from their reconnoitering, there was a thin wail of rage and helplessness. Susan's eyes were closed, but the lids fluttered and her mouth was white and shuddering. They told him that to James Abbey a son was born. Under the white-hot desert sky another Abbey had come into the world prepared for it. The women were desperately busy. Outside men and boys were heaping up roots of sage-brush—*artemisia*, hearts-ease—for the night's fires, and tending to the cattle, and making plans to mount guard over the weathered train.

A week later, he abandoned the expedition.

They had got into the mountains. Unimaginable heights of naked lava and basalt—pinnacles, turrets, spires, the ruck and rubble of the world. Knifelike canyons hidden from the sun. Swift streams hundreds of feet below the trail, out of reach, not to be touched. Peak after peak disclosed only peaks and ridges and divides and vast amorphous shoulders farther on. The world was a tumbled chaos of points and knobs.

Only four of his oxen remained. To these he yoked the two cows that were left. His dog, his horses, his

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chickens, were gone. The wagon had been braced and propped and patched till every rut, every boulder threatened to pulverize it. He himself could have gone on—on to the Snake, to the Humboldt or the Columbia, past more deserts and more mountains till the Pacific wet his feet and only its tides opposed him. But his outfit could not, and Susan seemed likely to die. Susan—and the child as well. Neither had rallied. All day long she lay on the stony bed, tortured by the jolting wagon. All day the child cried and whimpered, and Susan's comforting croon was almost a groan.

"God above," he demanded of everyone, "isn't there a town? Isn't there a valley wide enough to breathe? Isn't there a place a man can stop?"

They knew nothing. They were for Oregon and the worst part of the trip was still ahead of them—a part, he knew, that neither Sue nor the baby could withstand. All must be endured—but how could he endure for wife and child? . . . At last a prospector, met in a barren canyon, gave him word of relief from lava and sage and unscaled peaks.

"You could hit for Salt Lake or Ralston," he said. "Any one'd give you a doctor. Any one's got beds and trees and room to swing a cat by the tail."

"I've seen enough Mormons," Jim said. "How could I get to Ralston?"

"Or you wouldn't want Ralston, no more. Windsor's Bilin' Springs is bigger sence the Florence rush. An' it's fifty mile nearer where you are, too."

With the point of his knife the prospector scratched a map between the eye sockets of a buffalo skull. Abbey must make the two sides of a V from the badlands where he was. The V was to take him round Wheedon's Peak and the terrible valley of Grouse

Creek, badlands so desolate and forbidding, so impassable, that these lava fields were Eden beside them. . . . It was a desperate endeavor, alone and ignorant, but it was the one chance of saving Susan and the child. Curtly he informed his neighbors that he was leaving. At dawn he urged his oxen down the knife-blade gorge that led south-eastward from the trail.

Meat and cornmeal, the one freshly killed from day to day and the other from the mouldy remnant of their store, were all the food he had for Susan. Her lacerations unhealed and her diet barbarous, she grew feebler with each day. The baby relinquished her breast, sick and crying, its face drawn and pinched. . . . They journeyed now down cool and shadowed canyons. They camped by night—when there was no sleep for James—beside roaring streams. They met with freshened vegetation, cottonwoods, evergreens. Odd mountain flowers crept up from the streams and the foliage began to be filled with songbirds. The peaks turned from red and chrome yellow to gray and lavender; mists began to run powder blue through their upper shadows; by night a heavy dew fell. The canyons burrowed deeper into the sides of the Rockies, the peaks towered farther above them.

He was driving against time, against the stupid sloth of oxen. At last, at the point of the V, the trail showed signs of use and plunged into a series of canyons which opened out after three days into a major chasm with gray and brick-red sides. The peaks plunged suddenly higher, gigantic escarpments that seemed to leap at the sky, gray with age and olive-green with pines and white at the tips with undying snow. Three times that last day he saw human beings. At a ford one of his leading yoke stumbled, squealed,

and fell—dead of exhaustion. Jim cut him loose and tied his teammate behind the wagon. He looked at the equipage. The oxen looked like primitive drawings of famine. The wagon, under all its weight of hardware, bowed and buckled till he felt he could have shaken it down with a finger. . . . The baby had not cried all day; its face was drawn and white. Susan was asleep; she slept most of the time, resigned to a coma from which she roused only to offer her slackened breast to the child. He had to look hard, now, to be sure she was breathing.

At sunset they came out between mile-high portals of slashed granite. Jim blinked and stumbled blindly. Beyond them a great valley stretched westward to distant, broken peaks hidden in mists of purple and fire-gold. But near at hand, just down the hill, were houses, human noises, the flash of little streams of water catching the red sunset-mist and flinging it back. Jim's heart turned weak with gratitude, then flinty with fear. He jabbed the near ox with his pole. . . .

They creaked down the long, wide single street of Windsor's Boiling Springs City while clouds turned gold and rust overhead. The baby wakened to wail almost noiselessly. He could not hear Susan stirring to quiet it. In a frenzy he dashed to the nearest building, a saloon, empty of trade at the supper hour. He stamped in, a ragged man almost dehumanized by dust, his eyes red-rimmed by months of alkali and desert-sun.

"For God's sake," he shouted to the bar-tender, "is there a doctor anywhere?"

The hired horses nuzzled among the sagebrush. Susan wondered whether they could eat cobbles. Holding the child on her hip, she stared at the tumbled doorway of the shack. It was a fourteen-foot-square frame of cedar logs, that James knew would rot to dust in a few years. Well, there wouldn't be a few years. A year from now he would have a house. He frowned at the dismay in Susan's eyes. He supposed, though, that it must be expected. A month in town had restored her, brought back her color, drained the fright from her eyes. But now, walking across James Abbey's land, she seemed to revert to the stunned hopelessness of the last month's journey.

He joined her inside the shack,¹ where already he had disposed all that the Conestoga had brought West. "We could stay tonight, honey," he suggested.

"Oh no! No, James, please!" She turned frightened eyes on him and saw his bewilderment, his hurt. She tried to find reasons. "Not yet, James. Look at the logs—the mud's all falling out between. Look at the holes in the roof. Why, there isn't a bed. There isn't a stove. There isn't anything. It's been so—so *good*—to be with people. Mrs. Farrand—what would little James have done without her?"

"I'll get to chinking the logs, honey. We've got to come sometime. God's name, we're lucky to get this much! What if we'd got to sleep on the ground while I rolled down logs from the peaks to make a shack?"

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She had held out one hand. Her face sobered. "All right, James," she said.

At once he relented. Of course she wanted the talk of women and the noise of town, after months in the desert. "We'll go back, honey. We don't really need to come out for a week yet."

Her smile was recompense enough. Should he tell her they could stay at Windsor's Boiling Springs City all winter? He hardened his will: the little store of notes and gold was low enough. A hundred things must be had before they could begin, and their prices, at rates that were fixed by freighters, were unthinkable. Lucky if Spring found him with enough for the horses he must have. Besides . . . he must get at the land. His heart was sick with its barrenness and yet he was reverent, awed, loving. Sage and oakbrush and alkali, it was yet his land, his, James Abbey's stake in the new country, the beginning of his freedom. He felt a strong excitement, he was beginning, this was the start.

He did not know whether the President had made him a citizen or an outlaw—whether he had any right to homestead a quarter of his own. Wherefore, for a month he had ridden the length and breadth of Windsor Valley, in search of some settler who would sell. In all that vast expanse there were not six score settlers and not a half-dozen whose claims were worth the fencing. Till at last he had found this claim in a little valley fifteen miles south of Windsor's Boiling Springs City where Ophir River broke through the mountains. For three years a Missourian had been clearing sagebrush on sixty acres of preëmption land, and now had grown hungry for his prairies.

Jim had brought out Hi-Yi Windsor, founder and

owner and mayor of Windsor's Boiling Springs City, friend to all the West, to look over the claim and appraise it. The great man, ex-trapper, ex-pro prospector, ex-freighter, strode about the plowed land, chewing his twist, and passed a judgment.

"I'd say 'buy,' Abbey. Land's good and goin' to be better. This feller's got a good eye. Squatted right down on the best water in the valley—Ophir Valley, Jim. Plenty timber in the hills, plenty water where the crick comes through—and some day you can take up more clean down to the Ophir. Land's bound to raise, too—Union Pacific's comin' through Ophir Canyon sure as hell. Grow? My God, Abbey, you could grow anything from red-eye to warming pans on this land. Any land within a hunderd mile of Windsor's Bilin' Springs City—why it naterally can't help growin' anything you sow. I say 'buy.' "

After days of pondering, Abbey bought. He bought the Missourian's right to preëempt a sixty-acre rhomboid that slanted from the gulch where the little creek led out of the foothills and made for the Ophir. It was on the northern flank of Ophir Valley—a fold in the earth five miles wide and three times as long, with the river flashing in the bottom between dense cottonwoods—and so open to the sun and wind. North of it a faint trail crept in and out of the foothills in the direction of the Boiling Springs. Behind it the gulch led backward to a canyon that slashed a wound in the side of a gaunt, gigantic peak. To the southeast was Ophir Canyon, a still more forbidding gauntness of ocherous sandstone; and to the southwest and the west, Ophir Valley, empty except for sage and oakbrush and the bottom-lands of cottonwood, brimming with shadow, waiting for a thousand more Jim Abbeys to

possess it. Five miles down the valley was another shack, on the homestead claim of Jim's only neighbor.

Little James set up a cry. "Let's go, James," Susan called to him from the wagon-seat. "It'll take till dark to get back."

Till dark and after. The fifteen miles of hill and gulch that separated them from Windsor's Boiling Springs City were a day's journey. There was no road; there would not be a road for years yet. "Coming, honey," he called, reluctant. "Coming." His eyes fed on his land.

The peak behind his shack—Ophir Needle, Hi-Yi had called it—wore the carmines and gold of autumn. Fifty, eighty, a hundred miles southward that bastion of peaks stretched out under the autumn sun, softened by many veils of lavender mist. Folds in the stone, gulches, canyons broke the outlines; the ridges climbed slowly higher into the mass beyond; they swept one's sight with them, always higher and farther, climbing through autumn mist upward and beyond till mist and distance mingled. And near at hand, under foot, rough and firm, was Jim Abbey's land. The hot, dusty stench of sagebrush filled his nostrils—sage everywhere, green and gray and lavender, fitted like a bodice to the breast of the hills, its fabric broken only by clumps of oakbrush and the spots of cleared land. A rubble of stones lay all about its roots, the wash of Spring thaws and old rivers dead for ages. Here and there cactus lay in flat nests upon the ground, or stretched spiny arms above the sage tops. Barren, stinking, and damned. And yet, his land.

His blood leaped with possession. His mind filled with the agony of the emigration—sweat of oxen, suffocating dust, blind orange sun, the maddening rhythm

of wheels and hooves and men's feet, the creak of spokes and felloes, squeals of oxen, oaths of drivers. Done for ever, this madness of the trail. This was trail's end—the house of falling rain, the badger of the West, blue woman of the West. This was the reach of Jim Abbey's hunger, the new world, forgetfulness, achievement. . . . He slapped the reins against the horses' backs and, swinging the team in a circle, stared over his shoulder at his home in Ophir Valley.

At last they were able to ease Susan's mind about her child. Jim, who had been reared in the Episcopal communion, was assured that God was a gentleman and so would not trick children into hell. But Susan had grown up in the shadow of divine hate. Through all that nightmare in the lava fields she had held a desperate will that she and the child should live till he might be baptized. Perhaps indeed her fear of torturing its soul in hell was what had saved their lives. Arrived at the Boiling Springs, her first need as strength came back to her was to find a parson. There was none in the little town—only Father Tierney, a Romish missionary who was not to be thought of. But one day a circuit rider came up from Ralston on his way to the Helena fields where vice was calling him. He, too, put up at the widow Farrand's, and Sue was happy.

They put on their best—dusty and old and wrinkled—and stood in the widow Farrand's kitchen where the evangelist had prepared a wash-basin. He stood beside it, a kitchen spoon in one hand and his black book in the other. Susan was smiling; the baby

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drowsed, opening its solemn, ancient eyes only to wonder at the parson and to turn away, bored.

"Is it James?" the parson asked.

"Yes," Susan said. "It's to be James, for his father."

Jim nodded—but suddenly bitterness welled up in him and he knew that for weeks he had intended otherwise. "No," he said gruffly. "That's my name—what's it ever got me? I wouldn't curse the little baby with another James."

Susan was startled. "But James—it's got to be. The father's name—it's our first baby, James, and he'd want to—why, you can't change it now. He's been James to me ever since he was born."

Jim looked sullen, and the parson shifted his feet in annoyance. "A body'd think you'd know your mind before you called in the priest," he said. "I can't be——"

Jim shut him off with a growl. "You're asked to baptize him—we'll find a name. Sue, honey, I'm scared of that name. I wouldn't put a curse on a dog with the name that's took me through all hell. Maybe you'd like Wallace——"

"Oh, no!" She shrank away, trembling.

"You see. I don't want any near name, either. Not James, honey."

"What, then? Oh, anything, James, anything you say." She would accept any name at all, to get it done with. Her joy in the baptism was blotted out.

Jim threw back his shoulders. "They called me a traitor. There's a name, too—they called him a traitor. I knew him. I served with him—he was a great man, Sue, just about the greatest the South had. Only he lost, and so he was a traitor and they cursed

him." He faced the disgusted parson with authority. "You name him after my friend. Call him Pemberton."

Sue nodded. "Oh yes. It's a beautiful name, James, if you want it."

They promised for Pemberton Abbey that he would renounce the devil and all his works and all the vain pomp and glory of the world, with all covetous desires of the same and the sinful desires of the flesh. . . . Jim was inattentive to the ceremony that meant so much to Susan, that she followed with rapt, worshipping eyes. He watched the bundle of red skin and shining hair, his son, who paid no heed whatsoever to his salvation. Not even the water poured on his gosamer hair disturbed him; his stoic detachment was not ruffled. . . . "Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child—" Jim realized suddenly that though the kingdom of God was being conferred on the baby, the kingdom of Abbey was born with him. This silent boy was to inherit the fat and tamed acres of Ophir Valley—Jim Abbey's son.

Holding the child before him, the parson glared at it. He seemed to be accusing it. "I baptize thee in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, Amen," he said, passing judgment upon it.

Little Pemberton, resting in the crook of the parson's elbow, rolled a little, stretched back his head, opened his eyes—and laughed. . . .

"James," Susan said later, "I wouldn't be scared to die, now."

He held her to him. "Die, honey? Why, there'll be lots more christenings—don't you let a new country scare you."

She smiled, reassured. "Wasn't he darling? He

took it like a lamb and never cried a tear. And didn't he smile like an angel?"

"Seemed to me he laughed. I would of too—I don't think that old goat is much of a man of God."

She disapproved the sacrilege, but her words had gone on to even more solemn things. "Jim," she said—and it was the first time she had ever shortened his name—"Jim, please don't ever call up things about the South—ever any more again."

He took her hand. "I won't, honey. I was powerful stirred this morning—I don't know just why."

"Let's let it die for good. That's what I want, Jim, that's what we came West for."

"It's a new day when we set up in the shack for good, honey. Once we're there—I promise neither of us will ever think again about what's over—about the South."

She faced him candidly, controlling her memories, earnest and very sure. "Let's drive there tonight, then," she said.

Windsor's Boiling Springs City, when Jim Abbey reached it in August 1866, had a history close-packed even for the frontier.

The Winter of 1859 closed down on a band of prospectors who were far from any settlement. Hi-Yi Windsor, trapper, Indian-fighter, freighter, and miner, had struck northwestward from Carson, in disgust. Arrived on the Columbia, he heard rumors of dust along the Salmon river, started westward through the passes, met with a half-dozen baffled wayfarers, and turned south with them, headed once more for Carson. A chance encounter brought them word of a new

stampede, half-way across Idaho, and this sent them at the about face across Nevada. But alas, Hi-Yi's confidence that he could improve on all known trails led them into disastrous weeks in the badlands where deserts and mountains ran all together, floundering for a way out which proved always only a way into deeper entanglements. The canyons were filling with snow when they started across Grouse Creek Basin, the most desolate badlands of the Rockies, and here Hi-Yi saw that they would be lucky to get out of it alive. Snows followed them for weeks till at last they forced their way through a pass in the Bitch Wolf Range. Here, they knew, they were to the north of Ralston, a station in the Majors-Waddell stage line, but how far north they had no way of judging. Estimates varying from forty to four hundred miles, they determined to winter where they were.

They found a sheltered bowl where a canyon debouched from the Bitch Wolf Mountains—later, Windsor Range—and where a dozen acres were pitted with hot springs—bowls of clear green water, forever boiling, rimmed high with white and violet and yellow salt, blanketed with steam all Winter long. A little geyser puffed a few feet into the air every few hours, and the whole vicinity smelled pleasantly of sulphur. Here Hi-Yi and his companions erected two log shacks and made shift to pass the Winter hunting, washing a few minute flecks of gold from the canyon-creek, and winning imaginary fortunes from each other at Old Sledge. One day a freighter joined them, making no explanation of his presence so far from any freight-road. Later, two other prospectors staggered in from the hills.

The rest moved off, when Spring came, but Hi-Yi

Windsor stayed. The hot water had cured him of rheumatism and many other distempers of the flesh. He felt no interest in the fields that had called so loudly the Summer before. Here at the mouth of Windsor's Canyon, beside Windsor's Boiling Springs, he had found Utopia. He loved the reek of sulphur; he loved the hiss of the geyser and all the prospect of the hills. Besides, he had an idea, never broached to his companions, that he could recover gold from the hot water.

Nothing ever came of the idea. But one day an emigrant train crawled past him, northbound, in search of the "cut-off" trains were always seeking, and within a month another followed it. By stealing, and washing, and gambling, and bartering, Hi-Yi soon had a respectable trading-post, two squaws to serve him, and a sign over his door. It read, at first, merely "Rot-gut," but when, in 1861, the new cut-off proved so successful that many followed it, the sign read "Windsor's Boiling Springs. Outfits bought and sold. Blacksmith. Whiskey. Games of Chance. Powder and Lead."

And then, toward the end of that summer, the cut-off suddenly reached south to Ralston and drained it of its trade—for far to the north there was a real strike and Windsor's Boiling Springs was its gateway. From all directions came frantic men feverish for gold. They poured by the Boiling Springs, and they bought and sold at Hi-Yi's post. By October there were four other stores at the hot-pot springs. By November freight-lines were operating north and south and west, a dozen saloons had opened, and a cemetery had been found necessary. All Winter long the rush continued; by Spring it had become the flood of a burst dam.

It was Windsor's Boiling Springs City, now, with Mayor Hi-Yi in a flowered waistcoat welcoming strangers from the stages that came twice a week, bowing to those who came on horseback, nodding to the *canaille* who came on foot. There were twenty saloons, half a dozen gambling-joints, a dozen bawdy houses. Logs, canvas, adobe, even sagebrush helped to make the walls of business-houses that doubled their capital overnight. . . . It was a noisy town with a stable population of a thousand and a transient flood that doubled and sometimes tripled the number. Mayor Windsor at his ease in his city had many prideful and juicy satisfactions. Where on earth was more whisky drunk? More gold-dust passed along the bars and across the baize-covered tables? More knowing harlots? Badder bad men? Nowhere, he might be sure, and he, Hi-Yi, was lord over all. So he listened to the oaths and the cracking whips of freighters by day, and the slide of galloping hooves along the street. And by night his ears rejoiced with the music of many pleasures—fiddles jiggling the blood of wayfarers to amorousness, laughter of girls who leaned their bosoms against the knotty arms of staunch men, click of poker chips, slither of faro lay-outs, rattle and slide of roulette-wheels, and all the roar and melée of twice ten bars where all the fellowship of mirth and song and rye-whisky oratory gave notice that men were there—and sometimes over all this uproar, the clang-tone of the Allen or the Colt.

Hearty men, brave men and daring—all the fraternity of Hi-Yi's kind. Song and laughter, and men who asked no questions. There was one strayed reveler who stalked from bar to bar, one night, desperate in his will to know all and to stay on his feet. Patiently

he plied himself with the hospitality of others and set them up in his turn, doggedly he passed from wheel to layout and on to fan-tan box, nobly he danced with the shimmering girls at Bon-Ton and La Rouge and Enterprise, heroically he pledged and drank and sang and quarreled. Dawn found him far from McNamara's or the Dutchman's. Its cleansing gray lighted up the resolution of his face. With a crayon he was writing a sign on the bottom of a barrel, a sign which, heaven helping him, he meant to raise above the highest peak that towered over the hot-pot springs. "Windsor's Boiling Springs City," that sign read, "As Hot as Hell and Hotter Than Any Place This Side of Hell."

So for two years, while Hi-Yi strutted and dreamed of a greater Carson, a greater Yerba Buena beside his stinking waters. Then tragedy. Freighters, or their owners, were business men, and from the east and north new freight-roads shortened by several hundred miles the hauls to Helena and Florence and all the Idaho fields. The Boiling Springs were out on the end of a branch and some one had sawed off the branch. The gamblers and the confidence men departed. The lovely harlots followed them. One by one the stores stood open to the sun, their glass shattered, their false-fronts warping in the sun. The frontier had given and now the frontier took away. There were left to Windsor's Boiling Springs City for glory only its graveyard and its mayor; for liquor only Pat McNamara and the latecomer Cartright; for business only a bi-weekly stage from Ralston, an occasional emigrant train, wandering Bannocks and Shoshones, and men who by preference passed from the northern fields along untrodden ways. Perhaps a hundred and

fifty were left to wander among the empty shacks, and these were there because they were too poor or too helpless to leave—married men who had brought their wives on, men who had holdings in corner lots and still dreamed of fortune, settlers who had sold their claims to make money at the Springs and now had no land to return to. And those who still believed that the Big Bonanza would somehow open up under their feet, the hills would uncover silver, or gold would run from the creeks, or another great stampede would bring the city to its own.

Perhaps a hundred more came there during the next two years. There was trade with emigrants and freighters and Indians and prospectors, but for the most part those who came were the weary, the exhausted, the maimed and broken of the frontier. Splendor and the big chance had passed them by. This was as good as any other den to crawl into to wait for luck.

But now hope had come back, and once more Hi-Yi Windsor might have the Chink press out his shiny flowered vest, and stride down what board-sidewalks were left to his city, with confidence that the dawn was here. He looked to the east, where all dawns come, and beyond the peaks he saw the new Windsor's Boiling Springs City, the boom-town magnificent, the hell-roaring city made beautiful forever. For rumors had been confirmed. From the first the engineers had balked at taking the Union Pacific over the divides and up the mountainsides that the stage-road climbed on its way to Ralston. And now, with work actually begun, far to the eastward, they had resolved to take the water-level route through Ophir canyon, to turn

north to the Boiling Springs, and to shoot westward, thence, in a straight line.

This was hope, this was glory, this was the splendid chance. The street would fill once more with oaths and dust and clamor of mule teams. Bullwhackers would snake resounding whips above them. By night Chance would come down from the heavens and gay, complaisant girls would flower in the dancehalls. Life would roar and drink deep. Buildings would sprout like toad-stools, and the city would march down its avenue of splendor while gold and trade and noise flamed at its side.

Here were Pat McNamara and Jake Cartright, saloon-keepers, counting days and miles till they might install bars of mahogany and acres of mirrors. Here was Hi-Yi blocking out his city in little squares, to give as many corner-lots as possible, which he might sell to trainloads of investors. Here was Sarah Farrand, widow of Steve Farrand, stage-driver and express-agent, planning to add rooms to her house and make it the finest eating-place in all the West. Next year, tomorrow, today, when the railroad came.

There was little left in the false-bottom when Jim started work on his holding. Three horses, two cows, a new yoke of oxen; supplies of all kinds; a steel-shod plow; more fixings for the shack and the yard than he had ever fancied—all this ate up his stake. He did not care. Live or die, they were in for it now. Days were too short for him. He labored at the shack, chinking the logs and making the roof sound. He plowed again all the land his predecessor had cleared. For many days he felled poplars and cedars

in the gulch and snaked them down behind the oxen; and then, when he had raised the sides of two squat sheds for stables, his one neighbor, Joe Rackham, bewildered him by riding the five miles to help raise the roofs and make them water-tight with clay and brush.

"Got to help a man when his roof goes up," he said.

Jim grunted. He preferred to be let alone. "Make out to do it myself," he said.

"Hell, Abbey, there's few enough of us. If we ain't neighborly we'll be talkin' to the rattlesnakes for company. How's a man goin' to live if the neighbors don't help?"

He spent three days doing Jim's work, eating Susan's cooking gratefully, and always talking. His words flowed like the Ophir, never disturbed by Jim's coldness. Then he rode away, promising that the time would come when barn-raising in the valley would assemble hundreds of neighbors.

"You'd help me, Jim, and I'd help you. It's what we got to do in a new country."

But Jim resented his interference. "All the West to move round in—you'd think he'd leave us alone till he was asked. What do we know about him? What do we care about him?"

"He meant kindness," Susan said. "You mustn't get your back up, Jim, in the West."

But Jim grudged every moment that kept him from the sagebrush. The land must be cleared! Yard by yard he widened the circle of upheaved, dust-black loam. The sage-roots were knotted and muscular; they dug steel fingers on the earth and would not be torn out. At first he went for them with a plow, but the share was seamed and doubled by their flint. There

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was nothing for it but his arms. With axe and grub he went for them, hacking the earth, wrenching out the long tentacles. A whole afternoon would clear a patch he could jump across. Such slowness made him frantic; he must tear away this poison to lay bare the fruitful earth beneath. Before breakfast, at dawn, he was hacking at it; sunset saw him still in the waist-deep gray.

Susan watched his sweating, obstinate labor, not understanding it. Why must he drive himself like an ox all day long? Because, he said, the Lord made the light all too short, and he must clear the land. By candle-light she scrubbed his hands free of the grime, cleansed the lacerations the sage had made, and with her needle pried out the microscopic spines of cactus that inlaid them.

"Your poor, poor hands, Jim! Can't you keep the cactus out?"

"Cactus'd go through a horse-shoe, honey. I've got to take what comes." Cactus was only an incident. It was part of the price he paid for land.

"It's so long," she said, thinking of the wide slopes of hill he must grub out, going over every foot of it with nothing but his two arms for power, slashing his hands and pricking them, paying blood for his soil. "Isn't there any way that's easier?"

Was there—was there? After grubbing till dark and then attending to the stock, he flung himself down on the upper bunk, above his wife and child, and sleeping toiled still amid the stinking sage. His dreams filled with that dusty stench and with the rhythm of rising and falling arms. He saw world-wide hills covered with sage and he must clear them all with an axe no larger than a watch-key. But one day he returned

to the labor after a cold autumn rain, and found the roots singularly yielding. He hitched a team of horses to a chain and in an hour had pulled and piled more brush than, by hand, he had cleaned in a week. Suddenly inspiration visited him. The next day, he steeled his heart to the loss of time, and rode over the denuded hills to the Boiling Springs where he sought out Hi-Yi.

"Who owns my crick?" he demanded. "If the valley ever fills up can they take it away from me?"

Hi-Yi spat the philosopher's jet of tobacco. "You're on the mouth of the gulch, ain't you? It's a latigo-cinch they can't rob you any water comes through." Hi-Yi grew judicial, remembering the real-estate deals of his town's boom years. "But, hey, us speculators—what if somebody went on up the gulch and located? I guess he'd shut you off like a busted sluice."

It would be wisdom, then, to preëempt all the gulch up to its end. But meanwhile, alone in the valley, he could clear his sage. Next day he began to dig a ditch straight along the hillside from the point where the creek curved downhill. Before the ground froze he could have a sizeable gutter a quarter of a mile long, and in the Spring he could flood all the hillside below it and pull the sage out at his ease. . . .

One morning he heard Susan screaming for him. Running to the shack, he met her on her way to him.

"Indians!" she was crying. She had caught up the baby and abandoned the shack to them.

He found four of them, dressed in skins and denim, examining everything in the shack, picking up cooking utensils, peering into barrels and boxes, staring placidly into the little mirror. "Who are you?" he demanded. "Bannocks?"

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They stared at him. He repeated the question without effect and then, remembering the lore he had picked up on the trail, moved his right hand, palm forward, slowly to the right and back. An old fat buck answered by holding three fingers up and walking two fingers of the other hand across them.

"Pai-Utes," Jim explained to Susan. "Miles out of their range."

He made the sign for "Hungry?" and when they nodded, he set out cornbread and cold venison, all there was to eat. While they fell to it, he noticed that a box of cartridges for his rifle had disappeared.

"I'd say I ought to shoot anybody that stole my powder," he remarked, loudly enough for the braves to hear, ferociously enough to make Sue's agitated face grow more concerned.

He fingered the revolver significantly. No Indian's face changed or gave any evidence of having understood. They ate steadily and deliberately and at last rose from the floor where they were sitting, but in the place where one had sat was the box of cartridges. They solemnly raised their hands in the sign of "Farewell" and faded from the cabin.

Sue nearly yielded to tears. She held the baby to her breast, clasped Jim to her, and stared at the departing Indians. "This country!" she said. "This dreadful, murderous country!"

"Shucks," Jim said. "Don't let a Pai-Ute scare you. "They're the cowardliest skunks in the West. Making out they couldn't understand English! Thieves, too!" He strode to the box that held their kitchen-ware. "Look! Nothing gone that's big enough to show under a blanket, and not a knife left in the box. I'd ought to killed them all."

"You wouldn't, Jim! Here in our house, like that?"

"Like I would a rattler."

He saw horror in the eyes she turned away from him. . . . Her exclamation, too, "this dreadful country!" He was afraid for her. If Sue did not accept this country, what was there to be done for her? She had left the South gladly—what bitterness was this? For him, all that was settled; it was the land of new beginnings, and all its sage and porphyry and drouth merely goaded life to a stronger pulse. But Susan! He often saw her staring at the peaks, near at hand and on the far southern skyline, with dread in her eyes—some fear of the mountains which she could not name and he could not understand. Sometimes she broke through the stupor of his exhausted sleep, and made him get in beside her in the lower half of the bunk on the west wall. Then she would lie trembling in his arms, clasping him and holding the child between them—would lie thus and whisper assurances that she was comforted and gradually grow quiet till she slept.

He could not know that she never waked him till the night had strained her beyond control. When once the candles were out and Jim was asleep above her, the West crept in between the walls. Mountain-rats ran across the roof. Off in the night coyotes barked and moaned. Nameless things sniffed about the cabin, and over all the other noises of the night—over the clumping of cattle in their shed, the wind prowling up the gulch, miles of sagebrush whispering—ran the clatter of the creek, a rush and crackle of many voices, the blast of a hot fire, the hollow boom of objects falling into chasms. But worse than any sound was the imminence of the peaks. Out there, in the blackness, these immensities towered over her—unimagi-

nable weights of stone. Her soul crawled in terror. She was obsessed by the fear that they would fall. She saw the world broken up in the chaos of that tumble—canyons opened up under her feet, all the rocks of all the world piling on top of her. By day she would stare at them as though she expected to see the nearest begin to topple on her; sometimes, with a bubble of madness in her brain, she would hold out her hands to ward them off. But, she knew, when they fell, they would fall by night.

The year dipped toward the Winter. There were supplies to be hauled from the Boiling Springs, corn-meal, salt-pork, flour, a little hay for days when he could not manage even cottonwood-bark for the stock. He had no rest day or night, but as he worked he looked toward the snow-caps that were creeping down the creeks, toward the clouds that raced eastward over their summits, and thought deeply. . . . So that one day he rode up the gulch with spade and hand-axe lashed to his saddle. A few days later, a hundred yards down the hillside, there were two holes fifty feet apart.

Sue came out to watch him, bundled in a quilt against the wind that howled down Ophir Canyon. Jim was up to his hips in one hole, scraping it clean. Beside him were two mountain-ash seedlings, the caked earth about their roots wrapped in shreds of canvas from the Conestoga. . . . He looked up at the wintry November sky, looked off at the line of peaks that huddled under their snows, violet and gold in the sun. Far away, at the uttermost horizon a snow-flurry stretched up a crooked blade of cloud almost to the

zenith. A flock of ducks, several hundreds, headed like a magnetic needle for the south, whistled as they flew.

His heart felt warm and yielding. Back there where the shack stood—the tall house with white pillars, rising from a garmenture of shrubs and evergreen. And here, on the bare hillside, where two holes made a yellow hiatus in the midst of gray sage—here with the cactus and the wind, Jim Abbey's driveway would turn in toward his house, down an avenue of elms and sycamores.

Jim set the first seedling in place and, as carefully as though he were filling a grave, packed the cold loam about it. . . . Susan watched him unsmiling, understanding him, with foreboding in her eyes. When at last he was done she stood beside him, linking her arm with his.

"I can get trees—real trees, honey—from the East, when the railroad comes through."

She did not smile. "Is the baby crying?" she said.

The next Spring, half a dozen new families moved to the valley. One Jed Wills was half-way to Joe Rackham's place, and Amos Bingham set his stakes only little more than a mile beyond Jim, on the floor of the valley along the Ophir. Jim did not mind; he supposed that the valley would eventually fill up. But then it began to appear that Amos Bingham wanted to be neighborly, and Jim saw no reason why he should be. He went to help Amos raise his roof, because Amos so naively expected him to, but he could not be gracious about it nor expand to Amos's later visits. Amos would appear in the evening and call Jim out to talk beside the flooding creek. He must be courteous, being host—if host only of a sagebrush-covered hillside. But he was not called on to be friendly.

Susan, however, was glad to have Sarepta Bingham near. No vestiges of Hazelhurst's distinctions lingered in Sue's mind; it was enough that here in this desert was another woman. She took Jim to task for his curtness. "Good land, Jim, don't you be so short with him. He doesn't mean anything but good nature. You catch him up like he was a—" "nigger" was on her tongue, but she held it back. "Anyway, Jim, be decent to him. Treat him like a human."

Jim was puzzled. "I want him to let me alone," he said vaguely. "He isn't—what is he, Sue? His folks went broke in Illinoy and moved to Ioway and went broke there. Amos struck out for Nebraska and never

even proved up. Now he's here. Just born to lose out, honey. But that don't count so much. What does count is—what does he know how quality think? He's got to be asking all the time, horning in, doing your business for you—I can't stand prying."

"Poor Sarepta," Sue said irrelevantly. "Five babies in nine years"—only three of them had lived—"and there'll be another this Summer."

Sue shuddered, remembering her own delivery under the desert sun. She visited Sarepta when she could, walking across the sagebrush hillside, and was glad when she saw the older woman, in the evening, on her way to the shack. When Jim bought a pinto mare from a wandering Indian she began to talk of riding it. There was no side-saddle—nothing but Jim's enormous army contrivance. With much trepidation she tried that, riding astride when twilight lessened the possibility that in all this desert anyone would see her. Jim was moved to tenderness. Something in the sight of that frail woman in such an undecorous posture moved him to affectionate laughter. Her thick skirt drew up over her ankles, and this drastic freedom shocked and delighted him. But when, after she had learned to manage the pinto, she spoke of riding it to the Bingham's or the Wills', perhaps even to the Rackhams', he was stern.

"No, honey. You can't make a show of yourself."

Her face fell. It was the only activity in which she had shown eagerness since they had started West. But it never occurred to her to question his will. "Could you make a side-saddle?" she asked.

The wish bothered him. Only a little gold was left and that must be guarded parsimoniously. He would have nothing to barter with till Fall, and even then

who would there be to buy? And though he must save the gold against emergencies, it seemed that he must be for ever wasting a day riding to the Boiling Springs and lessening it for some new necessity. But he saw Susan looking off across the valley, starved for talk with Mrs. Rackham and Mrs. Wills—talk, no doubt, about the ailments of children, the terrors of the desert, the tight farmhouses the future would bring them—and he resolved that she should have her saddle.

He got it at last from Hi-Yi Windsor, for an option on the wheat he had sowed. How a ladies' saddle had got across the desert to the Boiling Springs, he did not ask. No doubt it had paraded the shamelessness of a harlot during the flush days. Sue did not ask. He hoisted her into it, and heard her laugh like a girl when she picked up the reins.

Meanwhile he labored. As soon as the frost had left the ground he was assaulting his hillside. All the cleared land must be plowed and sown. There was the garden beside the shack, which he filled with seeds and cuttings of all the vegetables he could get. There were the two fields his predecessors had cleared, which he sowed with corn and wheat. And always there was the sagebrush to be cleared—morning and night. Through every rain he worked at it and slowly he carried his high-line ditch westward along the hill from the curve in the creek. This irrigation proved all he had wanted it to be. After running water over a patch of sage for twenty-four hours he could uproot it with a team in no time. He built a log bridge across the creek where it flowed past the house. He enlarged and tightened his sheds, put a new roof on the shack,

spaded a plot under the window for the flower-seeds Sue had brought along the Overland Trail.

Sue had conceived a plan, the first evidence that she was reconciled to Ophir Valley. She had watched him dam the creek where it turned down hill and heard his plans to dam it again a quarter mile farther up the gulch. "A mill!" she said one evening, excitedly. "You could run a mill with that water."

"What would we do with a mill?" he asked.

"We'll have wheat and corn to grind. You don't want me to pound it like a squaw, Jim? And we'll have more than we can use."

"Where'd we sell it? How would I get a stone?"

"Laws, Jim, you can make one, can't you? People make everything in the West."

"Trees," he said violently. "I want orchards. A man knows he's beat the earth when his trees bear."

He looked out at the pale dust-green of the sage. All that hillside shady with peaches, pears, apples, Jim Abbey walking among his orchards. And, below him, the long avenue of elms and maples leading to the house. . . . But the mill was an idea. Good, too, that Susan should speak of it, should be interested in it. He began to level off a wide patch beside his dam.

His great shoulders squared and toughened with a power wrung from the earth. Before dawn he was at work; darkness found him tireless and unsubdued. All Spring the earth drank the sweet rains. Marvelously soft and sweet, the valley—tender grass shot up between the clumps of sage, wild roses climbed through the oak-brush, flowers bloomed everywhere. Susan filled her arms with cowslips, violets, meadow-sweet, sago lilies—and ventured out with a knife to transplant them in her garden. The desert was fresh

and clean and one's lungs ached with the tonic of perfumed air; the ground yielded underfoot like something that lived.

Jim straightened up from his battle with the sage. What had he heard? He looked across the valley—across hillsides made grave by the shadows of high clouds, to the Ophir in yellow flood among the cottonwoods. Again that musical melancholy call. Not the eagle that soared far up the side of Ophir Needle. Not the chatter of robins or the cry of snipe along the creek, not the sage-sparrows all about. A five-note song that rose and fell and was answered from all sides. It gave him a strange sense of freedom and timelessness. What was that bird?

Sue did not know and when Amos Bingham made his next call he said merely "buzzart." All birds were buzzarts to Amos, but Sarepta solved the mystery for Sue. "Medder-lark," she said.

Suddenly the rains ceased. June passed without a drop. By mid-July dust lay like a veneer on the leaves of the oak-brush and the ground was like brick. You could not walk fifty yards without hearing the buzz of a rattlesnake. The sky had the nickel-white glare that had made the trail a nightmare. The sun rose yellow and was orange by nine o'clock. Corn and wheat had pushed up luxuriantly through the wet loam, but now turned brown and wasted away. . . . The crops were gone, the only hope he had had of preserving his little buckskin sack of gold. And the tension of drouth and heat had brought back dullness and despair to Susan's eyes.

"God didn't mean the desert to bring forth," she said. "It will always be this way. We'll dry up, ourselves, like the corn."

Amos Bingham would plod over by night to echo her despair. "Damn desert! We're fools, Jim. Only a fool'd think he could grow stuff here. Look at the crick—" he pointed to the boulders that had been submerged a month ago but now stood up above damp sand, at the Ophir shrunken to shallows where the trout gathered like minnows. "That'll go, too. My God, nothin' grows here. They'll pick our skeletons up ten year from now when the train goes past."

Something desperate in his heart forbade Jim to accept the judgment. If it was true, then indeed there was nothing left, nothing to do, no end on earth but failure. "I tell you you're crazy," he said. "Look at the sage. Where sage grows anything'll grow. We'll live to see the whole valley filled up with orchards and gardens."

"We'll live to go back to our wife's folks," said Amos and spat on the parched earth. "You can talk. You ain't got a kid on the way."

To Susan Jim predicted rain and plenty, recalling the deluges of the Spring. She said nothing but looked out at the hillside where the sage blended all together under the heat-mirage. He began to promise her the house she longed for, drawing it for her room by room. They would use the shack for a store-house. Near it would be the kitchen of the new house, clean and tight against the wind. There would be a sitting-room, a bedroom, perhaps another room.

"I'll rake the West for lumber, honey. I'll build a sawmill at my dam, if I need to. I'll get a real carpet through by freight-team. We'll get a crib for the baby."

Sue only looked at him unsmiling. She saw the house taking shape in his mind. He saw it, she knew,

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as real as his avenue of trees, far more real than the squalid shanty they were living in. Outside, she heard the hot wind rustling the sage and, along with it, the withered remnants of Jim Abbey's crop—the crop which was to have bought lumber for this house. . . . His face was burned like the bottom of an oven-baked loaf. The skin had drawn back over his cheekbones like rawhide. The Abbey cleft between the eyebrows was as sharp as the gulch behind the shack.

She threw herself into his arms. "Oh, Jim, you work so hard! You're tramping yourself down. You're killing yourself for this desert. You're a good man, Jim—I don't care if we never have the house."

He was awkward at caresses. He felt the dirt that was part of his fingers. "We've got to hang on, honey. That's all, hang on and see it through."

By days and nights of toil he had saved the kitchen-garden, shoveling caked earth and prying out boulders to bring a ditch from the diminished creek. Not much water flowed through it at any time—the earth drank it up on the way—but by keeping it open all the time he managed to get many thin trickles among his plants. They answered gallantly. Potatoes, garden corn, cabbages, turnips, carrots shot up and lifted their bright green defiance to the sun. Every day he pointed them out to Sue, in triumph.

"Look what this land'll do," he said.

Amos was maddened by his success, and even Joe Rackham and Jed Wills rode in to behold and envy. "I ain't going to have so much as a pea or a bean," Amos said, and swore from his heart. "Nor I ain't got a cent to buy, neither. You won't sell none of this to me, Jim. You'll have to see me through to Spring."

Had he said a word about selling? It was not in

Amos to understand that a gentleman shared with the unfortunate, even though it made him a charge on Sue and the child.

"You saw me do it," he said venomously. "You've got a river to take water from—and any fool knows he's got to have water here or die. Take it or else starve. The country'll teach you."

He made a desperate effort to get water to his corn and wheat. But they were too far from the creek to be reached by any ditch he could dig. Nevertheless he kept at it, spading away at the flinty earth. Hours after the sun was down and the cattle were sleeping in their sheds he hacked away. His shirt stuck to his shoulders, chilling when the night air struck the sweat. Susan came out to be with him after she had put the child to sleep. Wrapped in a shawl she sat on the ground, silent, sympathetic. The moon came up from behind Ophir Needle, a row of pines stencilled across its face, and its almost lavender radiance picked out the undulations of the hills, under strata of silver dust that hung in the still air.

One morning he saw her coming through the sage. An old wide-brimmed army hat of his was on her head—meager enough protection from the desert sun—and over her shoulder a spade. He felt weak: something was choking him, dragging at his knees. He must be turning white under his beard. Susan avoided his eyes but took her place at his side and struck the spade against the earth. He heard it clang. The ground was unyielding; she had chipped off fragments like broken rock. Again and again the steely clang of the spade. He was helpless; he felt that his limbs would not move.

"Damn it, Susan!" He sent his spade hurtling across the stunted sage. "Stop it, I say!"

He swung her to his shoulder and made for the cabin with great strides. She held to him, terrified by the first oath she had ever heard on his lips, but nurtured and stirred by his strength.

"That's the end of the ditch," he said when he set her down on the doorstep. Great tides of anger were running in him. "I'd rather roast to death—or starve. I never want to see my wife in the fields again."

She had seen Sarepta, he knew, hoeing beside Amos though big with child. But Susan Abbey! His very soul cringed. That would indeed be defeat. That would be intolerable, not to be borne while his strength remained to him.

"If you could get some one to help!" she said. She was still drawn to the power she had stirred in him, still glorying to see him on fire.

Some one to help! Where was there any one in the desert? How pay him if any could be found? . . . Suddenly he caught a glimpse of the years stretching out till these desert acres should be tamed. Years not to be counted, filled with the drouths and agony of this year. It was not a job for one man—one man could but begin it. The house of Abbey rose before his eyes, translated to this western hillside, beginning again a long period of achievement. He stood above the packing-box where the child slept—Pemberton Abbey, with only a breech-clout on him, protected from flies by a strip of lace from a petticoat his mother had worn to a ball years before. His baby skin was mottled with a heat-rash, but even in defenceless sleep he was a competent child. For all the perils of the first few weeks, for all the terror he had drunk with his mother's milk

and all the crudity of his first home, he had grown beyond his months. He was no weakling, but his father's son.

And this sleeping bundle of soft flesh—this was the son of Jim Abbey, who should one day put his shoulder beside his father's and bring the West under rein and whip, and on another day should take his father's place among the lawns and orchards of the estate they had created. . . . Jim's heart contracted with love for the child—and hope—and a desperate fear. It was the first time he had really seen his son.

In early August a girl was born to Sarepta Bingham. Susan and Mrs. Rackham helped her through—Mrs. Wills being too near a similar trial to ride across the sage. Sue came back the next day, depressed. The baby had delighted her; they were going to call it Edith, Sarepta having fixed on the name almost before the child's first cry. But the agony of birth in the floorless, gaping shanty Amos had built for himself had too vividly brought back Sue's memory of her own terrors. Of late her dread of the high peaks had lifted; they had seemed remote, barren of menace; but now they trembled over her again.

"The babies!" she burst out. "We can stand it—but children. . . ."

She saw Jim's weary forehead crease in bewilderment—the old wonder, the old incomprehension. He would not understand. They had asked only to forget what they had put away. They had asked nothing of the new land, had expected nothing. They had found what they had found. No use, then, to rebel or wring

your heart. Put up with it; take what came; bend it to your will.

She caught his bewildered eyes, and went soft within. She would never again say a word to disturb him, to suggest her fears. She would lock them within her and Jim would never know what forebodings she lived among, what terrifying glances into the darkness of their future here in this desert with a child growing up.

Amos was disgusted. Jim unbent, tried to be gracious, to keep contempt from his voice—and managed to say he was glad no one was the worse. “Hell,” said Amos, “a girl! What good is a girl in this country? I’ve got to have boys if I’m goin’ to come through.”

“Maybe your wife can do with a girl,” Jim growled.

“Maybe-so. No girl ever yet grubbed sagebrush off a acre.” Amos considered. “Well, there’s plenty time yet. Won’t take long to get another boy here.”

Shortly thereafter riders brought word that a war-party of Bannocks was reported on its way toward the Boiling Springs from the north. With Sue beside him on her pinto, Jim Abbey, holding Pemberton in his arms, rode off toward the village. He found it noisy and happy with preparations for war. The rifles were out, the saloons were full of shouting men. Leaving Sue at the widow Farrand’s, he strode into McNamara’s, where he was welcomed.

“Make Abbey head of it. He’s been a soldier,” they were proposing before long.

Pat McNamara set up frequent rounds on the house. “I’d go with you, boys, if I knew a ramrod from a Parrott gun. Now’s the time to settle ’em for good. I’ll pay a pint of the best for every Bannock scalp you bring in.”

They were sure that the time had come to make the

country secure for ever. They would hunt the Ban-nocks down till the last of them was done for. Spring Creek had showed the way—slaughter them all, to the youngest papoose. They formed two parties, one headed west, the other north. Troops were on the way from Fort Stalling, but the Windsorites, roused from sleep to the glamour of Indian fighting, hoped to do their work before they arrived.

In command of the northward bound detachment, Jim rode through the badlands just west of the main range, a broken waste filled with natural ambushes. His old habit of command woke naturally. He ordered out scouts, reconnoitering parties, flank-guards, and himself loped ahead, kept touch, put back to observe—for all the world as though he were leading Mississippi cavalry into touch with Buell. The Windsorites, few of whom had known him at the start, accorded him obedience without protest.

Hi-Yi Windsor reverted to a craft he had not practised since he had first found the boiling springs. Jim was surprised to find him expert in desert craft. "Oh, I ain't a fighter," Hi-Yi would protest. "I'm a natural-born coward. I'd ride hell-for-leather all night to git away from a harsh word. Only, there ain't no one else seems able to read ground-sign."

He seemed to like Jim and lay by him at night, their heads pillowed on their saddles, and recounted old tales of the West that was gone.

"Right across here I rode with Jim Bridger, twenty year ago, bound north for robes, my first year in the West." Or, "I seen Carson with sixty trappers cross this country on foot, after horses the Cheyennes lifted from 'em. Carson—my God, Jim, there's been men could handle a rifle before him, but there's none that

could touch him at any range. There was a man—greatest of 'em all. I seen him with Fremont's gang—I tried to join on but Kit wasn't takin' no boys when he had a army officer to wet-nurse. I guess not even God was a better man on the trail than Kit."

He fought over his encounters with Indians, rocked his cradle for yellow dust, led a burro across quartz deserts after drifts and pitches, and slaughtered bad men by the double handful. Jim felt a curious stirring of response. Acknowledged authority had warmed him till he wanted to be one of them, but he could not shed his reserve. He could not talk idly. When something needed to be said, he could say it—ungraciously, for the most part—but chatter was beyond his power.

They turned homeward, when a week's scouting had unearthed no Bannocks, and Jim's authority dropped from him. On the march his companions had been obedient, but released from danger they became mere roughnecks. They shirked the duty of hunting game or guarding the bivouac. They blustered when he gave them orders; they ignored his suggestions or even ridiculed them.

"Why should I ride off a mile by myself and look like a fool?" one of them said. "I ain't a coyote, Jim. There ain't a Bannock within a hundred mile."

"Because you're told to," Jim roared. The man rode off for a few hundred yards and, a half-hour later, quietly rejoined the party.

"Better hold off," Hi-Yi advised him. "Ain't no need to stand on your dignity now we ain't on the war-path. Nobody made you a general anyway, Jim."

He withdrew into an angry sullenness, riding apart from the group, moving his blankets away from them at night. No one but Hi-Yi tried to penetrate his

isolation. . . . The last day's ride developed into a holiday. They whooped and fired their guns. They charged at each other and reined their horses high in the air at the last instant. They turned somersaults in their saddles, yelling and pounding one another. One rode whooping up behind Jim and crushed his wide stiff hat over his forehead.

Hi-Yi saw the muscles along Jim Abbey's jaws tighten like ropes. Slowly he knocked the hat back into shape and then, setting spurs to his horse, reached his assailant and with one motion lifted him up. Jim's horse reared but he beat it down; the other horse galloped away.

Jim shook the fellow giddy. "You'll keep your hands to yourself," he said, and flung him into a nest of cactus, where he lay roaring. Jim's horse pranced just above him.

The man struggled out of the cactus, frantically picking spines from his clothes. "Who'll get my horse?" he was howling. "Hi-Yi, damn you, go after him."

"Get it yourself," Jim ordered, and his eyes kept Hi-Yi motionless.

Hi-Yi followed him away. "My God, Jim, it's a miracle he didn't shoot you."

"Him? I'm safe enough."

He rode on till they were only a drift of dust far to the rear. How had he ever thought he could be one of them? He should have broken the face of every man who tried to approach him as an equal.

He reached the Boiling Springs an hour ahead of them and found that the other party had just returned. They had met the cavalry from Fort Stalling and had accompanied it over a long trail till they found the

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Bannocks and opened fire on them. When at last the Indians abandoned the battle and headed for the badlands, they had stayed to scalp the half-dozen dead and then turned homeward.

They were at Pat McNamara's and Jake Cartright's, raising hell as victors should, and all the men of the village were with them. Hi-Yi's inglorious party, no less parched, joined them. The two frame shanties rocked with a fellowship they had not seen since the old days. A dozen choruses, a dozen groups of heroes recounting their deeds.

Sue and Jim could hear them from the widow Farand's. "Joe Bowers," "Buffalo Gals," "Oh Susanna!" "American River," and others less chaste of language roared through the gaping doors. He saw Hi-Yi, already staggering, weave his way from Pat's to Jake's. "It's the greatest day we've knowed since Francine moved to Helena," Hi-Yi roared. "Wahoo! I'm Peg-leg Smith a-countin' of his coos." Toward six o'clock two deathless friends at Cartright's tried to shoot each other up. Whisky spoiled their intent; they put a bullet through a bartender's thigh and several through Jake's bar, but that was all. They embraced. Soon afterward, shrieks from McNamara's emptied the house. Someone, a desert-weathered scout with long hair and fringes of buckskin down his legs, had tied the scalps to a hitching post and proposed to lead a dance.

"I'm Peg-leg Smith," he was shouting. "I'm Tom Fitzpatrick, the Bad Hand. I'm Jim Bridger and Lou Vasquez and Joe Meek. And I'm a-countin' of my coos."

Sue retreated to the kitchen, where she could drown

the whooping in the clatter of pans and talk about children's ailments, but Jim sat on the stoop to watch the milling drunks. They formed a circle round the post, whooping what each held to be a war-cry. Various they leaped into the air, palming their mouths, shrieking and kicking their heels. The circle bent and billowed. Dust rose up, red with sunset, and half veiled them. Empty bottles crashed against the post. Tiring, a man would weave out of the cloud, pause for breath, empty his revolver in any convenient direction, and then leap in again yelling.

Father Tierney, coming in dust-covered and weary from some long ride, took his horse in a wide circle round the orgy. He, too, lived at Mrs. Farrand's, and he paused to talk to Jim after giving his horse to Jeff Farrand, her son. He saw the abhorrence written on Jim's face.

"What is it, Mr. Abbey?" he asked.

"I'd like to ride into them with my horse," Jim said.

Father Tierney looked gravely at the dance. "They mean no evil at all. It's only high spirits after a long ride, I'm thinking, Mr. Abbey. They've known what it is when Indians do reach a settlement."

"How can you make excuses for them? If that isn't drunken debauchery——"

"You're a soldier and have seen nothing of the sort? What harm do they do, my son?"

"Why can't they bear themselves decently? Men should be men."

"I've not heard that they were ever aught but flesh, Mr. Abbey. And they hungry to live a little, and the flesh weak." Father Tierney went into the house to clean and compose himself.

They went back to the farm. He had been thinking of it as fresh and green—full of willows and water and growing crops. But there was the bare shack, its logs warping apart and decaying, the dry clay dropping from its chinks. There were the sheds, sagging and weak. There were his seared acres of wheat and corn. Over all a coat of white dust, and about it only the desert sage.

He looked at Susan—still slender and erect, still unvanquished by wind and sun, resolute, armed against the fears that gnawed at her. No complaint, no repining, only reliance on him. Who had brought her into this desolation? He saw the worn and faded calico she wore, its colors run into each other from countless washings. He knew that the few others she had were in worse shape. This was Sue Haines, Mrs. James Abbey.

“Susan, I can’t have you like this!” he cried.

In a sudden revulsion he unlocked his box and counted over the dwindling coins. He divided them into two equal parts. One he would save he knew not for what, for panic or famine or death. The other he tied up in his buckskin bag and rode back with it the next day to the Boiling Springs.

He bought a bolt of calico and a long strip of muslin, with a card of decorative buttons that somehow had got into Hi-Yi’s store. Then he sounded out Hi-Yi on the question of lumber. There had been no sawmill since the owner of the last had packed it off to Florence. But, for a price, Hi-Yi was willing to sell him one of the empty stores which he might demolish and haul to Ophir Valley. The price almost emptied the buckskin bag, but Jim would have paid it if it had used up the half he had withheld.

Sue's eyes shone when he put the cloth in her lap. She ran her fingers along the selvage. "Oh, Jim!" she said, and wept while she threw her arms round him. The cloth meant much—but how could she take pleasure in it when she must look out at the blinding whiteness of the sage?

So that when the drouth broke Jim was painfully building a frame house—he who had no more skill at carpentry than at farming. His saws were dull and sprung, nor in all the available West were there any tools to re-set them. Nails were not to be had—he pried them out of the boards he had bought, straightened them, tied them up in bags lest he lose one. By infinite labor he set true the ridgepole and the corners of a two-room house joined squarely to one end of the shack. Then day by day he had to wrench it into order with his hands, roof it, floor it, build its flimsy partitions, lay its doorsills.

As it grew his neighbors rode in to marvel. Almost shipwrecked by the drouth they took courage from his prosperity. Already, they seemed to feel, already there was a board house in Ophir Valley. Amos Bingham was bitter.

"To think of you with money in your sock. Me, I'm starvin' with all my family—and a new one just here. And you, you got a board house." It was natural, Jim supposed, for Amos to envy some one. The presence of better luck confirmed his own misfortune. He was born to fail, and to fawn on his betters. "Anyway, we can live on you till we get a crop. . . ."

Jim's energy in the face of hardship had impressed Hi-Yi, whose mind was forever unfolding bright visions. He rode out to the valley to broach a new plan.

Pointing to the stand of pine and spruce that swept up from the gulch toward the top of Ophir Needle, he said, "You got good timber, Jim. Well, listen. I hear the Creighton Company's settin' out to bring their telegraph from Ralston to the Springs. They got to. Ralston never did count a damn and now the railroad's comin' through the Springs they got to bring the wires out to meet it."

Jim nodded. At the Boiling Springs there was no other talk but the railroad. Some said next year, more thought the year after, only killjoys believed that still a third year must pass. Out there to the eastward an army was pushing steel rails toward Windsor's Springs. And when the rails came the city would grow like a setting of bread in a warm corner.

"Well," Hi-Yi went on, "there ain't no good timber south of here and's far as Ralston there ain't hardly even sage. Poles, Jim. You got the timber and some horses. I got more horses and a speck of cash. What say we go pardners sellin' poles to the wire company?"

Jim's spirits rose. He perceived how far discouragement had terrified him. Here was a chance for life. . . . But, he realized, he didn't want any relations whatsoever with Hi-Yi Windsor. He did not know why. Only, he felt that he must be alone. He must depend on himself. He found himself despising the weathered and ridiculously be-gauled frontiersman.

"And I'd say, Jim, we'd ought to do pretty good. I've knowed the Creighton feller at Ralston. Say we set a price on each pole—then we back down and say we can't afford to do business on that. Creighton feller boosts up the price on each pole, OK's it, and we give him half of everything over our first price."

Hi-Yi grinned at the beauty of his plan; not everyone had his gift for contriving boodle. Jim was glad to find rational ground for refusing him. "No thanks, Mr. Windsor," he said, "I reckon I can't spare the time."

"Time! Listen here, you'll make more in a week sellin' poles than you'll make all your life hoein' this desert."

It was an additional insult—very welcome because it bolstered that instinctive distrust. "Maybe so. I came West to farm."

"There's plenty folks willing to go pards with me. I'm doin' you a favor to make you an offer."

"You can wait till you're asked for favors."

"Aw, don't get on your high horse with me, Jim. Honest to God, there's money in this for both of us. No need to cut each other's throat. It's a runnin' start for the big days when the railroad comes. We'll have the jump on everybody, Jim——"

"Mr. Abbey to you," Jim said and walked rapidly away from the dumfounded Hi-Yi.

Jim was gazing at the timber, wondering whether he could swing the job himself, wondering whether he dared to try, wondering whether to try would be infidelity to the earth he worked with, loved, and hated.

By the Spring of 1871 James Abbey's third house in the Ophir Valley neared completion. No sun-warped, second-hand lumber went into this building. Masons came from Windsor Springs City, the mushroom town that had followed the railroad boom; they laid foundations of granite and set over them blocks of gray sandstone they had hewn from the cliffs themselves. Susan, still patient and puzzled, stared wonderingly at the house. Five immense rooms there were, laborious to contemplate if work in such rooms had not been a joy. They were floored and divided with lumber from Jim's own sawmill at the curve in the creek. Its whine and buzz, all day long, had ceased to bother her as soon as she realized that they were singing a hymn of home-making. She timidly rejoiced in the money that was available—to buy rugs and dishes and chairs, even to send to Omaha for a parlor-organ and a table. Ruth, the daughter of the house of Abbey, born the year the railroad came through, would have the baby-quilts and the crib that Pember-ton had never had. Almost, Sue was resigned to the mountains. With security, with children, with green fields, she had far more than life had seemed capable of holding. The first Summer in the valley seemed remote, unreal—and even the prolonged death of the emigration, even the war itself.

Jim watched his house grow. This much he had brought to be—let its walls rise straight and firm, let

them be thick and true, staunch against the weather. It was not the mansion of fir-shaded porticoes and white eaves. That would come—the wrinkle between his eyebrows deepened—that would come, though maybe it would not come till the boy Pemberton grew up to help him. Forty-two—he could count on thirty years yet before his shoulders would stoop and his muscles slacken. Thirty years. . . . His ears caught the echoes of a whistle in Ophir Canyon. A train coming from the East. Sometimes three a day roared through his solitude. He went off to join Herman Kleinfeld at the mill.

Herman Kleinfeld had been with him ever since he had begun to sell poles to the telegraph company. Already, Jim began to forget that it was Herman's insistence that had persuaded him to spend the last of his gold to bring a circular saw by freight-team from Omaha and so had made possible the mill that had turned out thousands of ties for the railroad. Herman it was who had bartered and bickered with the contractors, changing Jim's fixed prices as the need fluctuated, selling ties for a quarter when he could get no more, asking and getting a dollar, two dollars, three, three and a half, when there was a chance. Herman it was who had prodded him to enlarge, to buy more saws and more teams, to hire more men, to build more barns—who had, in fact, made possible the sum that was deposited in the Omaha bank, whence came the house and security for the future.

Herman Kleinfeld—a flaxen-haired, red-cheeked, broken-tongued German who had been a hostler for Wells-Fargo and who had turned up in the valley at an opportune moment. Within five or six years of Jim's age, he had recently brought out his family to

the valley, five boisterous, dirty, half-clad *Deutsch-kinder*, and Anna Kleinfeld was big with another. Herman had knocked together a two-room shack out of boards discarded from the mill, had protested piteously when Jim would not allow it on his land—and Jim's new purchase had carried his farm a quarter mile further down the valley and an equal distance along the hill. After two years Jim had not lost his contempt of Herman. A cringer, a liar, he required Jim's constant supervision lest he cheat purchasers on their orders. He had tried to bilk the railroad out of large sums. He had, Jim suspected, even accepted splits with the representatives of contractors. And, probably, there was worse to tell. Herman talked much about his war service. He had been many months in the Union service. Jim despised him, for there was no doubt that Herman had made a good living jumping bounties. That, Jim suspected, was the motive behind his coming West.

Herman stood beside the rough flume that led water to the wheel. Precariously swinging by a two-by-four across it was Heinrich Kleinfeld, Herman's oldest, intent on nailing back a loosened cleat. His father hoisted him to safety as Jim approached.

"Liddle fool!" Herman was saying. "It must be nait on a slant, so—" with gestures. "Will it last that way should something get past the screen and hit it? Is he *dumm*, Mr. Appey? *Dumm!* Gott! It is a wonder you are not bangrupted by my boy."

They fell to talking business, above the obligato of the saws. Two men worked all day long feeding logs to the band saw, making clapboards for Windsor Springs City. Half a dozen more hauled logs from the mountains, and others drove Jim's four-horse

teams to the city with the green boards. Over all this activity Herman had gradually come to have authority. It was he who bought and sold, hired and fired, ran the business that supported what he considered Jim's folly, the land. . . . That was what preoccupied him now.

"Two new saws, Mr. Appey," he protested. "There is a feller here to see me yesterday—from the railroadt. They will use four, six and eight inch planks, hundrets of them, thirty feet long, thirty-five feet long, one foot, and one and a half, and two feet wide. These, too, there will be a marget for in the city—she will grow till there must many big stores be, Mr. Appey, and they will use them. Our carriages they will not take a thirty-foot log—dear Gott, I sweated quardts when we were making twenty-four foot for the depot. And our saws—look, we need all new ones and especially coarser bandts for the big planks."

Jim grunted. If Herman had his way a dozen carriages would be working at once and a litter of sheds would spot the hillside. Jim had never believed that the luck of the sawmill would last. It had made money from the railroad. It had made money from the boom which the railroad brought to the city. Now it would stop making money. And, deep in his heart, he rejoiced. He wanted no distractions from his farm.

"I can't afford new saws, Herman," he said gruffly.

"They will be paid for before I cut one hundret planks for the railroadt," Herman tried hard to restrain his derision. "Mr. Appey, it is goot business to buy them saws."

"I say I can't afford them."

"Dear Gott! with all that money in the bank? You are richer than any man in Windtsor Springs."

Jim's head went back and from his placid height he stared at the rosy German face. "You will leave my business alone," he informed Herman.

"Mr. Appey, please, I don't mean impudence. It is goot business to buy them. How," he wailed, "how can I sell planks to the railroadt if I cannot make them?"

"Don't take the contract," Jim said, and moved away. Glancing in the mill—it was only a wide roof supported by posts—he saw a new man at the carriage of the circular saw. "Where's Cook?" he demanded.

"I had to let him go, Mr. Appey. He would have a dollar a day, he said, or he must quit. This one, he will work for six bits."

Cook had understood horses, the nearest way to Jim's heart. "Six bits! A sawyer is worth more than that."

"He is worth what you can get him for. Why, it cost him nothing to sleep in the mill—and I could have docked him for that. Since there is no more building railroadts, men are cheap, Mr. Appey."

"I don't want you to fire another till you've seen me. I won't have you out of your place—" Jim broke off. Susan said he must curb his temper, must not carry a major's discipline into the affairs of the West.

He saw Cook, later, sullenly wrapping his goods in a pair of blankets and sent him out with a team to clear sage-brush on the new land. . . . In three years he had divided the creek just below the sawmill and carried one branch of it along the hill whence little ditches distributed water to the fields. Below this "highline ditch" the hillside was green with growing

crops and at the house other canals led off to where the orchards would eventually be, were slowly spreading now when he could get trees from the East.

Most of the emigrant trains that the U. P. hauled through the valley did not more than pause at Windsor Springs City but hurried on to Oregon and California lands. But the boom that had swelled the city's population to three thousand had left a deposit on all the fertile valleys round it. Twenty new families dotted the floor of Ophir Valley with houses that were already graying in the sun. Jim's boards had eked out the logs that built them, but happily they were all remote. No one had come nearer than Amos Bingham—whose envy of Jim grew to awe as the mill prospered and whose family was the richer by still another child.

In one way Jim welcomed the newcomers. They gave Susan an interest he had despaired of ever finding for her in the West and their fields slowly spread a carpet of green over the valley. Laboriously they would grapple with the earth as he had done. Not for them the security he had won with a sawmill. Drouth and hail and plagues of locust would assail them; some would survive; some would go under. All would come to look to him as their adviser, their refuge, their guardian.

But in another way he loathed them. They were so dull, so chained to their plows, so incapable. And, withal, so inquisitive, so pushing, so clamorous for an equal share in his thoughts and businesses. . . . He shook himself; let them touch their hats when he approached.

The fat and happy voice of Anna Kleinfeld reached him before he entered the house. Unkempt, broad,

speaking half-German, she was helping Susan arrange the new kitchen. There was a range brought in by the railroad. There was a long table with skillets hanging from it. There were shelves laden with baking utensils and supplies. In one corner a churn which Sam Bingham, Amos's oldest, had been hired to operate, and milkpans which Sam would fill from Jim's herd.

Anna shut up at once when Jim entered. She curt-sied to him, her face sobering, and gathered to her skirts the two minor Kleinfelds that had been wrestling on the floor. "Vell, Mrs. Appey, there is no getting my vork done here. Ach, that man of mine! You should hear him. Always I must churn, vash, tend *dieses kinder*, milk, sew. I say to him, 'Herman, you should a Mormon be. You ask one voman should do more than all Brigham's vifes. I am not tvelve vomen in polygamy—only one Anna Kleinfeld.'" She laughed broadly, spanked one of the little Kleinfelds and taking the other under her arm hurried out of the kitchen.

He had never understood why Sue's face was chronically grave, nor why it should lighten when other women were about. "Anna's so good!" she said. Through the window—the glass window!—she watched the stout German figure waddling down the road. She sighed, and the soberness came back to her eyes. He saw a certain listlessness in her movements as she went on putting the kitchen to rights—she who had rejoiced in the strange new wealth of knives and pans and towels!

"Where's Ruth?" he asked, to divert her to her greatest pleasure.

"She's asleep. Look at the darling, James."

She led him into the bedroom where Ruth slept not

in her own cradle but on the splendid bed which a tramp cabinet-maker had built for them at the Springs. The bed, too, was triumph; it salved Jim's heart and wiped out for ever the indignity of those bunks nailed to the wall of the shack. Swathed in great lengths of cloth Ruth slept soundly, one hand pressed flat against her cheek. Sue swept her lips across the child's damp curly hair.

He was on the roof, tinkering, an hour later when he heard Sue cry "Pemberton!" in horror and affright. He had heard the same terror in the same cry a hundred times in the past year, and had as often hurried frantically only to find Pemberton in no extraordinary peril. From the ridge-pole, now, he could see the boy standing at the edge of the creek, fascinated by the early May flood of clayey water. In Sue's mind the child was already drowned. Jim swung to the ground and caught up with her in her dash to save her son's life. But Pemberton, seeing a posse after him, fled up the creek to the weir which turned water into Jim's orchard canals and took refuge on the plank between two great screw-wheels that raised and lowered the dam. Here, above the yellow foam, he was in genuine danger. Sue knelt sobbing, afraid to call him lest she frighten him into losing his footing, desperately picturing that tumble and the steel bars the flood poured through.

Jim said steadily, "Do you want to see the horses, Pemberton?"

The boy, without glance at the roily foam, picked his way across the swaying plank, jumped to the ground, and ran into his father's arms. Water and horses—at five years, the world held no other magic for Pemberton.

Sue composed herself. "You fenced us in from the railroad"—the tracks crossed the farm at a tangent less than a hundred yards from the house—"Oh, Jim, can't you fence off the creek? Pemberton's always there, whenever I let him out of my sight—and Ruthie's growing up."

Jim, with Pemberton shouting over his shoulder, was feeling the boy's arms and legs. "Look at that! Feel those bones. He'll be as big as me and just as strong." He swung off toward the vast, ugly barns that had been built during the flood-tide of selling ties to the railroad. He set Pemberton astride a sleepy mare, let him kick her with his heels, let him feed her handfuls of hay and stroke her wide, sagacious forehead.

That afternoon Father Tierney rode in to spend the night with Jim. Many men had passed under Jim's eyes during the three years. Traders, captains, laborers, gamblers, settlers, swindlers. In all the rout none struck any response in him beyond distaste or frank contempt. But slowly between him, the expatriate planter, and this graying Irish priest had grown up a kind of friendship that made up for the rest. Father Aloysius Tierney! All Hallows man, grave, warm, and unyielding, no more learned than need be, in authority over as much of the West as three or four horses could cover. . . . Susan did not approve of him, was hardly able to treat him with decent civility. She kept him from the children as if he might put a spell on them. Now, she shepherded Pemberton away, who had made in a straight line for Father Tierney's horse.

The two men shook hands gravely. They strolled off to put up the horse at the barns and then back to

the creek where the priest freshened his hands and face. There was supper in the new kitchen, cold beef and thick brown bread and mush and milk—Pemberton noisy at his mug. Susan frowned when the priest crossed himself, after Jim had finished his short grace. But she repented because he was a guest, and afterward, asked him rather timidly if he would not like to read from the Bible she had brought with her along the trail. Somewhat surprised, Father Tierney consented. He thumbed through it, his mind on Jim, who waited naturally, reverently, for the word of God.

“ . . . for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert. And the parched ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water: in the habitation of dragons where each lay shall be grass with reeds and rushes. . . . ”

Father Tierney did not read well, but Susan listened and, when he was done, took back the book with a sort of armed charity. The men wandered outside, Father Tierney gently impelling Jim to tread with his feet on his own land. It was a softer land, in the Spring dusk. Twilight quite etched away its rawness. It seemed the great, subdued fields it would be far in the future. Jim relaxed from his daily strain. He smelled the humid fructifying earth. He saw the hillside pitching downward to the valley-floor, to the cottonwoods along the Ophir. He saw the mountains marshalled in order against the pale sky, the snows retreating farther toward the peaks.

“The boy must grow into it,” Jim said, suddenly, passionately.

“A strong pair of shoulders he has—he’ll need them.”

Jim began to point out the future. All along the

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hillside, for he would have it all, there would be orchards, since the sun was always on it. Below, many acres for hay, for wheat and oats, for potatoes. A man could raise all he would ever need. He could be his own country. And wherever there was room, more fruit trees.

"Windsor Springs will have a grand day eating all your fruit, Jim, and it no more than three thousand souls."

"There's the railroad." It was the West's answer to everything.

"Aye, and a peach will rot before you get it to Cheyenne."

He had a vision of his peaches yet to be jolted across the rails that had covered his path westward. His peaches, banged about like so much coal, dust-enameled, decaying. His thoughts went on to Pemberton who was to rise at his side. Push out the fences still farther, crowd back the sagebrush over the hill. He saw the fire shining through the open door of Bingham's shack, a mile away. Too shiftless even to build with the boards he might have had for the asking! This was a country for Abbeys.

"You've done well, Jim," Father Tierney said. "You're the biggest man for many a mile."

The praise struck a chill in him. He glanced uneasily at the line of peaks marching so decorously into the blackness under the rose light of the afterglow. The priest talked on. "Tis an encouragement you'll be to them that come here. The valley will be filling up, Jim. The trains they puff in from heaven knows where and they're filled with them that would never have lasted in the old days. Many stop at the Springs

—for a man's money gives out as easily one place as the next. And some will always be coming here."

"I guess so."

"And no soft life before them. They think when they leave the East they'll plow a quarter as easy as swing a cat by the tail. I've not seen wishing pull a stalk of sage, these ten years."

"I've got the best of it now," Jim said decisively, "and I'll buy the best of what's left. Let them come in."

Father Tierney glanced keenly toward the powerful figure beside him in the darkness. "They'll be cottagers about the squire, eh, is that it? Well, I wonder, Jim, I wonder. And I've found myself wondering by night when I think of you in my bed."

"Wonder what, Father?"

"It's a hard land and it asks for strong men, which is you, Jim, you that could pull a plow as well as any ox. And then, too, it's a beautiful land, Jim."

"A what?"

"So beautiful, I'd not wonder to find God walking in it at the cool of the day. You don't think so?"

Jim shook his head. Certainly he had Susan's word to the contrary. For himself—well, he liked the sound of the creek sucking at its stones and, back in the darkness, splashing down from the spillway he had made. Some day he might think better of it. But first his house must have two stories. What was his friend talking about?

"Sometimes I can't understand you, Father."

"Nor I you, Jim Abbey." There was a considerable spleen in the priest's voice. "Under God, it's my trade to know men. I do not make you out—no more do your fellows hereabouts." He kicked a pebble with

the worn toe of his boot and began to say something which he cut short. They strolled on along the footpath that bounded one of Jim's fields.

"I tell you, Jim, there's a saying I heard at Kilbeggan as a boy. They say there 'fire in the heart sends smoke into the brain.' I've remembered it by night when I've had thought of you."

The coming of the railroad had moved the city from the hot pot springs where Hi-Yi had trustingly built bath-houses for a health-resort, three miles westward to the level ground. Pat McNamara's saloon, with a half-dozen others, now fronted on the main track a stone's throw from the red station, the only painted building in town. Near at hand the roads met coming north from Ralston, south from the distant gold country and east from the area of settlement.

Outside a wagon train from the north ended its twenty-day trip. Long whips curled above the heads of the mules. Bullwhackers roared and swore. Boys ran in under the cloud of gold-settling dust to unhook harness, to trundle barrels and boxes to the freight-platform. Fifteen or twenty drivers, while hostlers drove the mules to Hi-Yi's feed yards, detached themselves from the train and stormed the saloons. But only the wagon-boss and his assistant came to Pat's place. For Pat McNamara had set himself a standard when the railroad poured its thousands of Irish into town and the Springs were Track End for a week and Hell on Wheels for a month. His was the quality saloon of Windsor Springs. Fights were abruptly halted there; the games were square; great folk making the continental tour could be sure of beverages

sufficiently suave; and a door in the wall opened on the Dutchman's restaurant.

Tom Whitaker did not open his game till after the six o'clock whistle blew at the car-shops. Late afternoons he spent at Pat's private table, railed off at the end of the bar. Newspapers from the East interested him and lately he had spent many hours talking in undertones with Pat McNamara. . . . They were old on the frontier. Tom had been tempered in his art at Carson City; Pat had set out his first drink on the Palace Bar in '49. Now, since prosperity had run high, they would be men of substance, leaving their old ways behind.

Every one came through Pat's in the course of an evening. Even Father Tierney, who saw no reason to hold aloof from the pleasures of the men whose souls he was set to watch over—and especially Vincent Malooth. Vincent had rolled in with the U. P.'s ten thousand Irish and had stayed as yardmaster when they whooped on westward riveting their leg-irons on the desert. Yardmaster he was, brimful of the railroad's honor—and friend to all the transient world, and in particular opponent of Father Tierney. No doubt Vincent's arguments were part of the attraction the place had for Father Tierney, and certainly the common argument of the two entertained as many of Pat's customers as ever the bar or the green tables.

This afternoon the fortunes of debate had gone against Father Tierney. Vincent had taken Holy Church for a stroll along the pathways of his derision. Wherefore he crowed over the priest, who at last fled the attack.

"It's easy you've been today, Father," Vincent announced, "and I take no pleasure in winning a soft

fight. No atheist rejoices to beat a priest on a fast-day when the buckles on his braces are hitting his spine. You couldn't do your best and your stomach howlin' for the half of a biscuit."

"It's by no knowledge of your own, Vincent Mallooth, that you know today for a day of abstinence."

"No, but by the rolling of your stomach like a dog whining, Father. Do you get back to the widow Farrand's and wait till midnight for a cup of tea. Come back tomorra with a meal in you so's I can have some joy in provin' you wrong."

"Do you get home to your wife, who's a pious woman, Vincent, and not be putting a bad name on yourself. But mind you this," Father Tierney's forefinger went up, "get what fun you can out of making game of holy things, for one day I'll save your soul in spite of you and they'll be bad memories then. 'Twas bad instruction you had as a boy or the devil would never have taken over your heart."

"'Twas no instruction at all, thanks to my father who cursed every priest he met in Kildare. You and your devil—no doubt you watch for me to sprout a tail or take off my shoes and show you a clove in my hoof. You talk of your devil like Jim Abbey of his new stone house—but I see nothing in either of them. You'll have a drink before you go home, Father, to show there's no hard feelin's if y'are beat. I'll buy you from the bottle Pat keeps for travelin' baronets."

"Would I pollute myself with a glass of Pat McNamara's rot-gut?"

"Well, maybe not, on a day of abstinence. And mind you, Father, no prayers for my soul, for they keep me from my sleep like burnt sausages."

Father Tierney, still smarting from Vincent's logic,

made his way to the door. But Tom Whitaker, respectfully uncovered, stopped him and led the way behind the railing to where Pat McNamara sat at his private table. Pat rose at the priest's approach and he too removed his stiff, wide-cleft Stetson. Saloon-keeper and gambler, they would have respected the clergy in any event, but they had all of the town's love of Father Tierney.

"We'd like a word with you, Father," Whitaker said. Courtesy was as much a part of the gambler's trade as the flowered vest and flowing stock he wore.

Father Tierney bowed but, not to seem too pacific toward their reprehensible businesses, remained standing and so kept them on their feet also.

"We heard Jim Abbey's name. . . . It happens we're thinking of offering him—that is, Father, there's money to be made at Windsor Springs, the next few years, and we want to form a partnership to get some of it."

The priest nodded. "I'd be glad to see you both in a better business."

Pat McNamara hurried to defend himself. "I've got the decentest bar in the West, Father. You yourself—nobody's a word to say agin it. I won't want to be giving it up even if—if we do get into something else."

"You're an honest man, Pat," Father Tierney said. "And you've never hesitated to give a dollar to the poor when I've reminded you. It's no sin to sell honest liquor."

"But Jim Abbey?" Whitaker suggested.

"You mean will he go in with you? 'Twould be a rash man made any prophecies about James Abbey of

Ophir Valley. You'd need second sight, and I counsel you to have no dealings with false spirits."

"He'll be a fool if he don't——"

"And you'd be twice a fool to tell him so, Pat."

"That's exactly it, Father," Tom said. "You know him. We don't. He's mulish and he's got a terrible temper. You know him better than anybody else. How should we go about it?"

"You should not show him the money's the big thing—but how should I know? I don't know." Father Tierney refused to talk about his friend. "Jim Abbey's like nobody else. That's all I can tell you. His home's not at Ophir Valley, though his ranch is. I don't know where his home is. There's some men don't find their homes on earth nor in heaven nor yet in hell."

He hurried away, vaguely troubled by the fear that his words might have a scent of heresy.

The six o'clock whistle blew while Pat and Tom Whitaker were staring after the departing priest. Tom's partner spread a faro lay-out on one green-covered table and stacked poker chips on another. Then, after a glance at Tom, he took the bank's chair at the poker table. Tom shook his head; he had other business tonight. While they sat behind the partition thirsty railroad men rushed in and crowded to the bar. Pat's bartender yelled for the slop-boy to assist him in setting out decanters and wide-hipped bottles. Whisky glasses flashed across the bar in the level sunset light. The room filled with a cheerful clamor of oaths, greetings, laughter, back-slapping.

Pat pridefully surveyed his establishment. "I'm orderin' beer from St. Looey," he said. "How's that, eh, Tom? We're not pretty slow at Windsor's Springs,

oh no. None of your San Francisco belly-wash—real Dutch Maid straight from St. Looney. By God before the year's out I'll be sellin' it in bottles." Greater elegance he could not imagine. "Yes, and I bet we'll live to drink our champagne and our madyra right here in Windsor Springs."

Tom nodded gravely. Elegance was coming to the hot-pot springs. Of his years in the West he remembered with pleasure only those that had been spent in San Francisco. Ah, there had been food, then, and wine—women, too, of a great splendor, if women counted for much. He remembered chiefly dinners, sauces that waked the soul, sea-bass crepuscule, breasts of pheasants—partridge crushed in silver and fumed with cloves and burgundy. He thought of the omelette he had eaten this noon at the Dutchman's. He shuddered. But in the West he had eaten even worse. And if fate had meant him to stay on at the hot-pot springs, as it seemed, there was no reason why he should not some day eat dinners there.

Tom Whitaker was a small man and felt a small man's need of dignity. This he bolstered by fine clothes, fine manners, and fine distinctions. At the Springs, ever since the railroad brought him in, he was generally supposed to have shot his half-dozen. His quiet and deliberate ways seemed convincing: only a dangerous man dared be so unassuming.

"When there's plenty of money, Pat," he said, suddenly cordial, "we'll be wise to take up plenty of land. There'll be money in Windsor Springs lots."

"Yeh——" Pat spat contemptuously. "Didn't I buy half the continent while the railroad was here? Sure, the city would not go below ten thousand, and I'd ten-tuple my money. There's thousands of pints

of the finest I've blew in for land—I'm tellin' you, Tom, Jim Abbey's the only one who made money in the boom—an' he made it sellin' lumber to the fools that built."

"What'll we do if he won't throw in with us?"

"Go it alone! The more fool him if he don't—and the more fools us if we don't take while the takin's good."

"He'd be the biggest man of the four of us."

"He is so as it is. There'll be plenty for all. We won't be done when the job's over. There's more to come. . . . Shall we ride out and see him?"

Tom smoothed the flowing stock above his corded vest. "He might think we were too anxious. It can wait till he comes to town."

A general movement from the bar carried every one out to the station to see the evening train come in—the fast mail and flyer from San Francisco. The beam of the headlight through the Spring twilight fell on the villagers who crowded the long platform. The locomotive with its umbrella stack and its red painted cab snorted to a melodious pause, steam popping at all its valves, the bell clanging furiously. Vincent Malooth, long off duty, swore at the hostlers who fell upon it to uncouple it. Passengers poured out of the oil-lighted cars in search of refreshment. The conductor was roaring "Half an hour for supper. Be in your cars in thirty minutes. Beware of pickpockets and confidence gents." Karl Schmidt "The Dutchman" stood in front of his door beating a steel triangle to notify all those who hungered where the half-hour must be spent. A boy cried Omaha papers only four days old. Women of the town gaped at the fluffed, enormous skirts that the fashionables displayed, and

at the little hats, the parasols that hung furled from tasselled loops, the starched petticoats, the shining bronze-leather high-heeled boots. . . . It was the great world passing through Windsor Springs.

Hi-Yi Windsor, perennial mayor of his city, had mounted a bale of sacks that had been tossed from the express-car. The broadcloth of his mayoral suit, ten years old, was shiny and frayed: his flowered vest already seemed a relic of a long dead innocent past. But the old fire burned tirelessly.

"Gents," he was roaring to the travelers who gathered round him. "Make your fortune while the train stops. This-yer town's the dad-beatinest money-maker in all America. She's the oldest town inside a hundred mile an' I'll tell all that asks she's the livest. Five year back there warn't two hundred people here. This year they's three thousand. Next year there'll be ten thousand, and five years yonder she'll push Frisco into the bay. Spend a dollar now for Windsor Springs real estate and that-there dollar she'll breed like a flock of doe-rabbits. Choice corner lots, frontin' on the railroad. Homesites opposite Hi-Yi Windsor's world-renowned hot-pot baths. Hotel sites convenient to every saloon in town."

Three weeks passed before Jim made the trip to the Springs. He had three men working his farm, but even so must drive himself as hard as ever he had done before. He was harassed, too, by the fear that Herman Kleinfeld was using sharp practices at the mill. He had never become habituated to the steady income. It was small, but it seemed never to grow less. . . . Finally, he called Herman into formal conference and bade him have papers drawn up forming an equal partnership between Herman Kleinfeld and James Abbey. The German's gratitude expressed itself in tears. His delft-blue eyes worshiped his partner. He broke into a long, sentimental speech.

"That'll do," Jim growled. "And see I'm not bothered by this mill business. I want to forget it. But mind you, Herman,—I hate a thief. If I catch you cheating or selling lumber for more than it's worth——"

"Mr. Appey, I pletch you my wort. I will sell lumber so cheap no one will effer buildt another sawmill within fifty miles of Wintors Springs."

His fruit trees had begun to come from the East. He set them out himself, spending on each hole the care he would have used on a grave. He smoothed the clayey loam with his spade, patted the sides with his hands, cleaned the bottom of the smallest crumbs of earth. The trees must be set as true as a surveyor's plumb. He stepped back, sighted at them over sticks,

adjusted invisible leanings. Sue came out often to watch him, Ruth in her arms. She studied the lines of concentration round his eyes, the vertical cleft coming and going like a shadow.

"How long before they'll bear, Jim?"

"I don't know. Three, four years, maybe more. It doesn't matter."

Her eyes questioned him. He tried to make clear what he meant. "Well, anyway, they'll be there. We can see them from the house. We'll know they're there. I like to see them going down into the earth."

He slapped his spade against the fresh mound, leveling it. Down into the earth, his trees in his land, sucking up water, living in the ground. . . . A bundle of seedlings came, which he took down to the spectral drive furtively. But the novelty at once brought Sue out.

"Apple trees here, Jim?" she asked wonderingly.

He was abashed. He never talked about this stately approach to the Abbey mansion. "Not apples," he said. "They're just—trees. I wanted elms, but elms won't grow here. They're half mulberry and half walnut."

"Oh, Jim!" He found her trembling as she held his arm in hers.

He rode to town on one of his lumber-wagons. Pemberton sat on his knees shouting at the horses, ecstatic when for a moment he was allowed to hold the reins. It was a heavy load, the wagon piled high with immense timbers—a railroad order. At the Springs, he learned that the company was building a big corral and a high ramp and loading platform. Vincent Malooth, whose duties never quite deprived him of leisure for talk, explained what was up.

"There's been a lot of cows comin' in—druv up from as far as New Mexico. The Company"—The Company was Vincent's god and had all the attributes of Jehovah—"knows a good thing when it sees it, Mr. Abbey. There'll be more and more cows, so they're makin' ways to handle them." He spat pridefully. "You'll be makin' a good thing of the lumber."

Tom Whitaker, whom he knew as the gambler who had stayed behind when Hell on Wheels passed on, had bowed to him, an hour before, and asked if he might have a talk at Jim's convenience. He drove to the store that was no longer Hi-Yi Windsor's and directed the bestowal of a barrel of flour and other supplies on the bare floor of his wagon. Then, Pemberton's hand in his, he went to Pat McNamara's saloon. He entered diffidently, suspicious, vaguely disturbed. What did the gambler want of him? He despised the man for his trade and his false gentility.

Whitaker, McNamara, and Hi-Yi Windsor rose from the table at his approach, and opening the gate invited him in. They were respectful; they interfered with one another making room for him. Pat and Hi-Yi looked awkwardly at Tom, who took a bottle of brandy from the table and filled the glasses that had been made ready.

"We'd like the honor of drinking with you, Mr. Abbey," Tom said.

Jim lifted Pemberton to the bar, where the bartender produced a box of silver and copper samples, and ceremoniously accepted the glass extended. "Your health and prosperity, gentlemen," he said.

Tom frowned at Pat and Hi-Yi, who downed their liquor at a gulp like roughnecks. He himself smiled at Jim over his glass, sipped it, set it back on the table

near at hand. "Won't you have a chair, Mr. Abbey? Prosperity is a good toast. You've had a share of it, and so've we."

Jim sat down still wondering, more than ever suspicious of them. For a few moments he was silent, nodding when they spoke of his sawmill, following the confused deception of their talk. They spoke of the railroad's new corral, the softness of the Spring weather, the trade Adam Green had been doing at his new store. Jim's uneasiness increased. They wanted something and they wouldn't uncover it.

"What is it you want with me?" he said gruffly.

Tom coughed and spread his hands. But McNamara nodded. "That's right," he said, "spit it out, Tom."

"Well, then—we all know, Mr. Abbey, there's money to be made at Windsor Springs, a lot of money. There's a big future here and somebody's bound to cash in on it. It might as well be us. So Mr. McNamara and Mr. Windsor and I—" he waved a hand—"have formed a partnership. Wells-Fargo's selling their line from Ralston here, and we've bought it. Not that we're going to freight very long, Mr. Abbey." His voice sank impressively. "The railroad's going to build a fifty-mile spur to Ralston, which is why Wells-Fargo are selling. Now, there's building to be done, and there's money to be made. We—well, we've formed a construction company."

Whitaker admired Jim Abbey's dignity, his aloof superiority, and he felt that he had been speaking to him as an equal. Jim did not, however, relax from his suspicion, but waited for further information.

"We've got three stages, forty horses and mules, six freight wagons. Well, you've done well, Mr.

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Abbey. You're respected. You've got a position. You've made money and you've got a nice little business. We'd like to have you go in with us."

Again Tom waited. But in Jim Abbey's face he could see no softening. Instead he realized for the first time that it was antagonistic. He plunged into further explanation. "You've got wagons and horses that haven't been earning their share since the railroad passed through. Turn them into our company, and maybe some of the money you've made. We'll get contracts on the new spur, and the railroad'll lend us enough to double our force. There'll be other spurs after this one—they're bound to build north to tap the mines and the homestead lands. We'll be the first on the job—we'll corner everything that comes along. There's thousands of dollars in it, thousands and thousands of dollars."

"Your business, Mr. Whitaker," Jim growled, "will you give that up for the new one?"

Tom remembered that Father Tierney had advised him not to talk profits. "It's building up the country—it's helping those that come here. The railroad's been a big thing; look how it's hauling out thousands of poor men that never had a chance. Well, we'll be as big. We'll give work to many and we'll be making it possible for more to come."

"Your present business, Mr. Whitaker?"

"I'm giving it up. From the day we get to work I'll never touch another card. Pat is to be head of our construction—he'll take charge of every job. Hi-Yi will have the teams and outfits to look after. I'm to be treasurer——"

Jim Abbey's cold gaze rested on him. Under that scorn his blood was whipped into anger. He rose

from his chair and drew himself erect, slight and immaculate and furious. "No man dares say I've ever mishandled a dollar. My game's as straight as a towline——"

"Sit down, Tom." Pat McNamara pushed him back. "Nobody's said it. Your face runs away with you. Them pretty sentiments of Tom's, Mr. Abbey—I don't know nothing about them. There's money in this thing. We'll build the railroad and every other railroad it starts. We'll build everything. It's a big town this Windsor's Springs is going to be, a big, big town with a new boom every day. And it's easy to see, them that has the say about the buildin' won't starve. Thousands of dollars, Tom says, and I say hundreds of thousands. To be split four ways—that ain't hard to swallow. Them that won't see it, well, they'll get tromped on by them that does."

Tom, back in his senses, was making violent signs. "It's a true opportunity, Mr. Abbey. The four of us will make the best possible company. We'll be the first in the field."

Enough had been said. "No," Jim said. He rose, bringing them to their feet as well, protesting. "No, I won't go in."

"You haven't asked our terms. We'll make you head. We'll give you any share you like—any job you want."

"I don't want to join you." He recollected his manners. "Thank you, gentlemen. You do me honor. But I don't want in."

"Then you're a damned fool," said Pat McNamara.

Tom and Hi-Yi instinctively leaped aside. There was a space while sound dropped away and Jim Abbey looked into Pat's eyes. Pat's face flamed. At the

bar, Pemberton suddenly pushed over the box of ore-samples with a crash. Jim seemed to grow taller, wider, gaunter. Whitaker threw up his hands.

"Oh, my God, Pat," he said.

"Mr. Abbey," Pat said, "I'm the damned fool. I was not meaning what I said. Let it be unsaid."

At Jim's stiff bow, Tom slid back into his chair, where his hand trembled on the curved back. Jim swept Pemberton under his arm, bowed once more to all three, and stepped outside the railing. He waited for a moment.

Then, "Mr. Windsor, you know the country in Grouse Creek Basin?" Hi-Yi nodded. "Will you guide me there some time this month?"

"Sure, Mr. Abbey."

There was another bow and Jim disappeared through the swinging doors.

Tom Whitaker's hands had been steady when they dealt many a round with the jackpot boiling and a Colt's on every hip. But sight of Jim Abbey's eyes narrowing at Pat McNamara had made them as tremulous as a plucked banjo-string.

"If you're not a good Catholic now," he said, "make your peace with Father Tierney before tonight. Even Malooth would tell you there was an angel at your elbow."

"There wasn't a flake in your pan," Hi-Yi added.

"He's a damn fool—I never spoke truer word." Pat heaved his shoulders back and rejoiced that his lungs still drank in mountain air. "What'll we do now?" . . .

Sunset drew its violet shadows over the peaks. Carmine and gold and lavender, the western blaze crept up the sky. The horses plodded between deep

ruts; bumps jolted the wagon from side to side. So slow their progress that Jim could enrapture Pemberton by turning the reins over to his keeping. The boy leaned forward from the seat in an agony of concentration; the reins must be kept high, old Mort must be screamed at whenever he tossed his head, the road must be watched lest the team bolt into the sage. Jim threw an arm round his son's shoulders. . . . What had he done? What was to grow out of the day's work?

Obscurely, he knew that destinies had been decided today. Out of his very depths had come that insistent voice telling him to have nothing to do with these sneaks and gamblers, to veer away from their schemes. He could not, if he would, ignore it. Jim Abbey mucking through dishonesties waist deep, for dollars? He held Pemberton closer to him. . . . The sun threw a last crimson javelin beyond the rim of the great valley and dusk settled on the foothills. A myriad scents rose up from the sage and the oak brush, and with the night bringing the earth nearer he forgot his doubt. Windsor and Whitaker and McNamara—they were only gadflies whom the earth's first frost would kill. He, Jim Abbey, he and his son—they who bumped along a broken trail would endure for ever.

They were nearly home, after five hours, and for a long time Pemberton had been asleep, held close against Jim's body under his coat. The horses suddenly began to plunge and snort. Jim stood up sawing at the reins, and plying his whip. Not fifteen feet ahead of him he saw a dim, running form break through the bushes, cross the road, and disappear. A stench of carrion assailed his nostrils. He beat down the horses till they stood shaking and terrorized.

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From beneath the seat he pulled a rifle and sent two shots into the oakbrush on the left. The two lances of flame gave him a flash of still leaves, plunging horses, and the rutted road. Against his wrists the team tugged into a trot.

Pemberton was crying. "It's only a panther, son. Only the old man of the hills. Don't let him scare you. Horses are scared—men never are."

At last they topped the rise above Ophir Valley and went down into its bowl of darkness. A light burned in the window. With sight of that he could no longer even resent the gadflies. He gave the horses their heads. They stepped out against the brake. Presently they clattered across the bridge, and Sue was running out to take her sleeping son.

His doubt reawoke the next morning. As he went out to his fields he was suddenly oppressed by a fear of them, a fear that they had betrayed him. He was irresolute, whereas he should have attacked his work with the old frenzy of possession. He found himself devising excuses to go to the sawmill, where he had trouble restraining himself from confiding in Herman Kleinfeld. He hurried away lest he make a confidant of his servant. But he hungered for reassurance even as he dared not tell Susan. Yet he saw her sombre eyes on him, following his silences, touching the edges of his depression. So at last, hardly knowing why it cost so much courage, he told her of the construction company and his refusal. . . .

He saw that her eyes were brimming with tears, which she successfully restrained. She sat in the dark rocker, the latest of her comforts, and looked away from him, her knitting neglected in her lap. He under-

stood nothing whatever of her grief and could only feel saddened and a little resentful.

"You know best, Jim," she said, after a while.

She went on with her needles, twitching further loops on the coverlet that was to wrap Ruth in. A moment's clarity let him see her as she was, no longer young, worn with the labor of a frontier home, just a little gaunt from the desert sun and wind. Tenderness and pity turned him weak—to see her thus, worn like a common woman, cast down from the decencies that had been hers. A gust of anger shook him. He would wrench this country with his hands till it shaped her due for her! Sue's eyes were bent on her work.

But her quiet fell away. Of a sudden she faced him and let him see her eyes. "I want to see you first, Jim! First, first, first! Why do you draw up your back and be proud to them? This isn't a land for pride, Jim. They'll go on past you and they'll laugh at you for a fool." She threw the coverlet on the bare pine floor, with the most violent gesture he had seen her use in years. "I tell you your pride makes you so's you can't see straight, Jim. That's why you turned them down—you're too proud, you think you're still Master Jim Abbey at Velden and they ought to touch their hats to you. There isn't any pride here and there aren't any Master Jim Abbeys. You'll do as they do or they'll laugh at you."

He put out a hand to soothe her, as he would have quieted Pemberton. But she stood away from him. "Listen to me, Jim," she said more quietly. "I want to see you first—ahead of them all. That's most of what I've got to live for. And the Lord meant me to live for it or I'd have died a dozen times since we came. If I didn't want more'n life itself to see you

climb through to what you want—you're too good a man for this country, Jim—why, I couldn't stand to live here at all——”

“Aren't you happy in the West?” A moment before, he would have been unable to ask such a question.

She slowly shook her head. “Is that all you know? What do you reckon I'm listenin' to all night long? Well, Jim, that doesn't count. It's our country, whether I like it or whether it scares me so I'm afraid to live. We haven't got any place else on earth and what I want is to see you——”

“But, great God in heaven, Sue—what did we come for?”

“Not so's you'd have to take a back seat for anybody—and not so's you could keep on being an Abbey of Velden.”

“We came so we could get on our feet so far away from the South that we'd never share the curse that was put on it.”

“We came so's we could forget what had gone before. . . . Jim, till the boy was born it wasn't you so much I wanted as to get away from everything I'd ever been, and have something to do, and nobody to remind me of anything else. Well, I've had all that—and I've had you, too. Honey, I can't bear to think anybody's going to pass you—Jim, honest, I can't bear it.”

“How can they?”

“I've got away from the South and I've forgot everything that bothered me. It's less than a bad dream that's over, now. Every day I could sing thanks to God that that's all put behind me and never to bother me any more. But, Jim, you haven't. You've

brought the South on with you. You're quality and they're trash. You're a planter and they keep store. You're above buying and selling, and they'd trade their souls for a dollar. And you won't ever see that that's what's beating you."

"Beating me? *Them*?"

"A body would think you thought they were rattlesnakes." The fire died in her, and she became only a patient lusterless woman rocking in a chair.

But Jim's disturbance more than made up. Too many new ideas had assaulted him. He could make nothing of them, but he was stung intolerably.

"They're nothing at all. They're scum, they're little caterpillars, they're thieves and liars and—Sue, honey, their word don't mean a thing. They don't know what a man of honor is. A saloon keeper and a gambler. They aren't *men*. You watch them. They've got Hi-Yi Windsor in with them because he made a few dollars selling corner lots when the railroad came through. Well, Hi-Yi's no match for them and what'll happen? When they've milked him dry they'll throw him out."

He stood furious, trying to find words for them. Hagglers, thieves, blacklegs. He swept out one hand in utter condemnation.

"Well, that's not my way. They make my stomach crawl. There's no peace between their kind and my kind. Maybe there has to be folks like them in the world. I don't know. But I don't have to be."

Her fingers were unable to govern the needles, but she could control her voice. "What can you be, Jim?"

"I can be my own master. I can stay here on my ranch and look over their heads. You can trust the earth, honey, like you can't trust one of these little

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gadflies that'd set a price on their own soul. We've got the land, and we'll have more land. That's what I mean to do. Not here, Sue, in the Valley. There isn't enough of it—it's been taken up and it costs too much. But somewhere else, thousands and thousands of acres. Enough so that I'll be what you want—I'll be above them all."

"Oh, land!" Sue cried, altogether distraught. "Land, land! Won't we ever hear the end of it? Aren't you ever going to stop getting more of it? Land! You'd think it was God's heaven."

His fields rose up in his mind, his fields and his orchards, heavy with increase. "You can trust it. You can't trust felons. And it's what we came for."

Talk stopped for very lack of hope. He tried to see in her, as her fingers turned about the loops and purls, some sign that light had broken on her till she understood, approved, and warmly encouraged him. She must see! They could not stain themselves with that dye, could not slide downhill into the rank swamp of common men. But he could see no such sign, and finally he went out to carry his desperation across his fields. In Spring night all the valley lay subject to the stars; the Ophir, rippling among its cottonwoods, gave back a faint and shining silver; a soft wind was foot-loose on the hills. But doubt, alone under the stars, was too terrible; he went back to brood on Sue's silence in the house.

For the first time in his life, sleep was a stranger to him that night. He stared at a future made dubious by Sue's fears. He stared at the new idea of Sue—of Sue whom he had never known before. What recesses, what abysses of fear and brooding and bitter prophecy she had concealed from him! What others there

might be, not hinted at tonight! . . . He could not be wrong. Here, on the earth, he rested—on the honest earth, and the old, simple integrity of a man's heart. If they weren't true—but God must be denied before they could be. What did all this mean, all this fear and doubting, whither did it lead, what did it spring from? Worse, he knew that Sue who lay so quietly beside him had no more sleep than he, but stared as desperately at her own impassive fears.

He took her hungrily in his arms. "Sue, honey, whatever comes, all we've got to do is stick, stick for all we're worth. You're not forgetting Pemberton, are you?"

She lay close to him, but as he fell asleep he was convinced that she was desperately trying not to betray her sobs.

The new fear rode him day and night. He tried to talk it out to Father Tierney when next the priest came to see him. They walked as always across the evening fields and along the railroad, and Jim struggled to make clear the recesses of his doubt. He made but an indifferent job of it, for all his labor. If the priest was ever to see into Jim Abbey's heart, it must be by grace of his own.

"Do you know, Jim," he asked, at length, "why it was you came West in the beginning? No, don't answer me, for you do not. But I do."

Their heels thudded against the exposed ties. All the noises of night were loud against their silence. Half a moon was low over the western hills; all along the valley walls coyotes barked at it.

"You're no Catholic, Jim," the priest said after they had put another quarter mile behind them. "But the Church knows the hearts of men. It's knowledge of

men's hearts that ordained the sacraments. For, heretic that you be, 'tis Confession you're askin' of me."

Jim growled. "Don't talk like a fool. You'd ought to know I'm not to be converted——"

"Have I said a word to you since I've known you? No, Jim Abbey——" it was a parish priest who held up a lean forefinger—"I will ask no man to come to the Church, and no priest who knew you would ask you in her doors. But, heretic you may be, or stiff-necked, or just Jim Abbey—but whatever you are 'tis Confession you're askin' tonight."

Thud, thud! went their heels against the ties of the Union Pacific in the moon-lacquered valley of the Ophir. Father Tierney felt somehow unbefriended in the lonely, uncharted chaos, under aloof peaks that touched the sky. He was not so sure of God's simplicity when he talked with Jim Abbey.

"So I'll tell you what you are, Jim," he said, soberly, after another pause. "There be them that fall between two stools, and you are one of them. You came stam-pedin' over the desert, raising a great clatter and much dust, because the heart of you was hot with longing. And, says you, longin' after what? You would be Jim Abbey—alone and with no one nigh you. You would have a great place in the world. You would have naught to do with them others. You would be beyant the power of the little fellows to do you hurt or good."

. . . After another period. "You don't know it, Jim, but what you're askin' of God is to let you be free. It's freedom you want, though you've not the word for it, freedom from what binds the little men. You can't

name a great sinner or a great saint that did not begin with the word on his lips."

They were walking as desperately as though salvation hung upon their gait. "There was a heathen god I heard of, with a bird eating his liver. Them old stories, they're a means of grace, properly interpreted. I see no way out for you, Jim, for the bird will eat your liver till you die. For the Church knows, and sinners and saints have found out. God is free, Jim, but no one else, except to do his will. That's what I say to you, when you come to me for Confession."

"Jim Abbey, for God's sake what-fer'd you bring me into hell?"

Jim spat at the dry creek-bed they were following. He spat—but only bits of skin from his lips, flaked over with alkali. "When do we get out of this gulch?"

"Never if that pinto of your'n dances on any more shale. It's two days more travelin' till we hit the Heartbreak. This is still the Bitch Wolf Range, Jim. . . . There's water-holes where we'll be by dark. Don't know as I ever heard of water in 'em in August."

Nevertheless they reached the Heartbreak Range—minute poetry of names struck from the privations of Joshua Wheedon, explorer—and followed roof-pitched divides till they plunged downward three thousand feet into a vast, circular, sage-green valley.

"Here she is." Hi-Yi's swarthy face had been burned raw and his voice was a locust emerging from its burrow. "By God, I could bake a cake on that stun. I'm nearer hell right now than I ever was when I seen my first geyser."

Jim was staring off across the illimitable valley.

Sage. Heat-waves. Fortress upon battlement of yellow and carmine cliffs beyond. The air was faintly red, the sky white as the edge of a mirror, with all the peaks dancing a jig.

His horse whinnied, splashed its forefeet in the three inches of creek and bent its head to jerk away the reins for a drink. "This can't be all the water in the Basin."

"Can't it? By God, Jim, I tell you not even a cloud sails over here. Well, there is a spring over yon, ten mile maybe, see where them there willers are. And them willers is the single damn trees in Grouse Creek Basin."

"How big a spring?"

"Grouse Creek. Oh maybe your boy couldn't wade her. Forty feet across, maybe."

"Where does it flow?"

"Where'd anything flow here? Plumb out across the basin—and then she sinks. Don't flow nowhere, Jim. Just quits."

"We'll go look at it tomorrow."

"Oh, sure. It ain't hot or nothing. Pussonly I like to fry my brains. I like to swaller red hot lava dust. I love the stink of sage with the sun on it. So while we're here we might as well see the world."

Sunsets bathed them in purple and carmine and brought up winds that cut through to the chilled bones. Unimaginable peaks reached up from darkness, into twilight, into gold day. Round them a ring of mountains sliding into each other, a wrestling of hips and shoulders, groins and beams and bastions of half the world. Stars slid down at arm's length. Nights were icy wells and days a cavern lined with fire (plod, plod, oxen swinging West from Chimney Rock, West from

Laramie, to the Sweetwater—on to a log fort, to a clean creek, to any place where Susan might bring her firstborn into the world, and live.)

Sage roots, an incense in the fire, blazed out a circle in willows that shook and whispered, against the bawling of a white-foamy creek.

“Hi-Yi,” and Jim for the first time quieted himself to the nickname—“you know land. Who owns this?”

“Yah!”—roaring with laughter—“railroad choosed a dozen sections here to make up for some that’d been preëmpted along the right o’way. Thought there was coal here, maybe—God knows there’s plenty black stun. Rest is nakid government land. Railroad don’t know yet how full it’s been stung, but buyin’ or pre-emptin’, any fool that God made crazy enough could get a belly full for fifty dollars a quarter-section. Pussonly, I’d as soon buy earthquakes.”

“Whose land’s the creek on?”

“Railroad’s for the most part.”

Hi-Yi spat into the fire. He studied. His mouth drooped open. “God!—you—you ain’t?”

Pemberton ran along the ridge-pole of the shed that housed the new strap-saws. Below, a workman looked up and cursed at him. Pemberton's thumb went to his nose and, for revenge, he shied a cobble through the next opening and rejoiced to hear it clang against metal. Presently there were cries of "Hey, kid, belt's off!" and he ran in to clamber up between two moving shafts, straddle the one that was motionless, and tug the grease-smelling belt back to its pulley. Through the cracks, morning was a haze of peaks against shining blue.

Herman Kleinfeld, coming in, discovered him with horror and began an excited waving of arms. "My Gott! Get you back at once, Pemberton. Watch out them belts and shafts. Better jump. Jump! I will catch you."

Contemptuously, the boy backed along the shaft, swung an arm to a rafter, and fumbled with his feet till he found a way down.

"Have I not told you to keep that boy off the shafts?" Herman demanded of the amused laborers. "If his father seen him—oh my Gott——" Herman shuddered, then he rounded on Pemberton. "You haf again been fighting with my boys. I will tell them their big brother should do you up."

The boy dashed out of the mill. Rage turned him blind. He kicked a discarded beam till his foot ached, then fell to brooding on ways of humiliating the

blustering Dutchman who had humiliated him. Seeing him in two suggested itself, or pushing him into the millrace, or, on a horse, performing such prodigies of skill and valor that he would perforce die of shame. . . . He saw a minor Kleinfeld approaching with the tin pail that held Herman's lunch. Not caring to attack him with Herman about, he abashed the father in the image of the son by dancing a slow measure on the scantlings that ran above the flume and the millrace, swinging the length of them hand over hand, hanging inverted by his knees so that his head was within a few inches of the frothing water. The Kleinfeld boy danced on one foot in terror, but Pemberton came up straight, made a face, and, when the enemy started homeward fired stones at him till he broke into a panicky run. Pemberton could strut again.

Later he joined Amos Bingham at the edge of the wheat fields where Amos was clearing and leveling a place for the "thrasher," due tomorrow or the day after. Pemberton's mind leaped ahead to the coming grandeur. Whine and roar of the machine under a cloud of dust and chaff—straw gushing from the spout—horses driven round and round the drum—shouts, oaths, sweat, turmoil—incomparable beauty.

"Say, Amos, can I carry water—can I, huh?"

"Sure."

That was so easy a concession, that he ventured one more breathless—conceived on the instant, several years short of probability. "Can I maybe—aw, Amos, can I drive one of Pa's teams around the drum?"

Amos Bingham paid no heed to the question, but casually sat down on the ground and, biting a quid from his pocket plug, began to gouge the earth with a stick. "Your Pa's due back 'fore long," he lamented.

"There can't no good come of bein' uppity. Look at me—why should I get kicked round and about by all the gosh-damn hard luck in the world? Two farms I've had since I come to this valley. Whose are they now? Your Pa's—this very ground I'm settin' on, I cleared it. I sweat over it till I stunk, and what do I get? Nothin'. I'm a hired man on my own land. Oh, sure, he'll stake me so's I can grub out more sage up in the mountains where nobody'll ever get any water on it—an' sure as I'm a-settin' here, Pemberton, sure as I'm a-talkin' to you it'll be his'n when I'm done. Luck don't flow my way, nohow—that's it and you can take it or leave it. Look at your Pa—sawmill, big farm, and God knows what riches he'll take out of that-there Grouse Creek. Them that has, gits—I say. And look at me—who's your Pa, anyway? Up and down, back and forth, in and out I'm as good a man as he is anyway you take it. And every riches I ever had turns to dirt in my hand."

"Gwan," Pemberton jeered, "nobody ain't as good as my Pa." Acquiring a sudden distaste for Amos, whose eyes had begun to spill tears of self-pity, he loped away. If his father were indeed coming back soon, then it behooved him to go through the apple orchard for windfalls as he had been ordered.

Five years of labor in Grouse Creek had made no perceptible progress. A few rough shacks, an abortive dam, tiny clearings over which the sage pushed itself relentlessly—these, and an intimate knowledge of the peaks and canyons all about, were the sum of Jim's gain. Sometimes he had been able to get an old prospector to spend the Winter there, more often not: and never had he made any tangible advance toward the vision. He no longer talked about it even to Sue.

He came home from this Summer, which he had spent there with two or three paid laborers who changed from time to time—baffled and wavering, drugged with a doubt more subtly enervating than any he had faced before. Sue's summer pleasure had crumbled at sight of his despairing face. For she had been extraordinarily content this Summer, neighboring with the housewives who visited her on wistfully devised errands, whom she visited with no excuse at all—shrunk women they were, old before their time, stooped and writhen from labor, with hard but wistful eyes. All the cares of the house had been pleasant, now that Ivy, the oldest Bingham girl, had come to help her. Diverse sounds of trains and saws and barnyard cheered her days, and by evenings she had her children to put to bed, to sew and knit for, to dream over, planning splendors that ignored the valley of the Ophir with its rawness and its toil. She had taken, too, to reading—by the light of the strange new Rochester lamp that burned oil and hung from the ceiling—in the Bible she had brought West. She had rediscovered the tranquillity of her girlhood faith. . . . And now, suddenly, Jim's return, though he said nothing of his Summer, compressed her heart with icy fear.

Almost at once Herman was pestering him with complaints. "So much expense, Mr. Abbey. There are bills due, overdue. If you would give to me some of your time!"

He specified. The pay roll went steadily upward. To make a plank cost more every season. Logs must be hauled farther. Timber was scarce and poor. The new saws. . . .

"I've never wanted a big mill," Jim protested. "I've always kicked against enlarging it."

"We must keep up. There are mills in Windtsor City. They will swamp us if we don't keep up."

The necessity seemed to be drastic. They must have money. "But I haven't any money on hand, Herman. Will you understand? Every cent I own is tied up."

"Oh, that land! Neffer have I approved, Mr. Abbey. Money, it is not to be made by buying lands."

"You keep to the mill," Jim growled. "I'll handle my lands without you."

"It is the mill I think of now. Haf you no—is the bank in Omaha. . . ?"

"I tell you, no. When I bought the last section in the Basin—I have no account in Omaha."

"They say in Windtsor City," Herman mused, "Mr. McNamara and Mr. Whitaker and Mr. Green will make a bank there and keep the city's money at home. Maybe from them you could get it? Maybe they will ask you to be one of them?"

Jim's unquiet temper boiled over. Borrow money from the men he had scorned? He ground his heels through sawdust on the floor. Herman became apologetic.

"Mr. Abbey—you will take it in good part. I would not myself push forward in your plans—but the mill must pay its bills. I have—you have made me your partner. I have saved my money. You will let me loan the mill enough to see it through."

Jim flushed with gratitude. Here, in this humble German, whose early past he so heartily despised, he had found more loyalty, more sense of what was due a gentleman than in all the territory round about. From his height he looked down benevolently at the

red, earnest German face. "I haven't paid you what you advanced two years ago."

"There is no talk of paying back till you are ready, Mr. Abbey. I know my money is safe. You will borrow some more from me now, eh?"

"I can't let you risk your savings in a business that needs money."

"Sho, you must not talk like a child, Mr. Abbey. All businesses need money. It is a good business and it will be better always. Good! I will pay these bills."

That evening, Jim tramped down the country road to the hovel where Herman still lived, to caution him again. His eyes fell disapprovingly on the weather-beaten shack, the woodshed where the two oldest boys now slept, the littered poverty-bound yard. No wonder the Dutchman had cash on hand: he still lived like a squatter in his first year.

"Herman," he said, "get you a lawyer to draw up your notes and have him make a mortgage. I want you to be protected."

Tears rose to his partner's eyes. "Mr. Abbey, do you think I think you a—a cheat? Is not my pardner's word good to me?"

"Do as you're told!" Jim stormed. "Ride into the city on a load tomorrow. I'll sign as soon as you're back."

Far up in Ophir Canyon, a cloudburst had washed some rods of Union Pacific into the river, and a work-train had rattled into the gap. At Windsor Springs City the yards were in a turmoil, sending out wrecking crews, preparing to receive the injured, loading flat

cars with ballast to be dumped into the river. Yardmaster Malooth had been kept from his supper doing ten men's work, and at midnight he saw no way home before morning. Roaming from roundhouse to supply room, from dispatcher's office to car-shop, directing the whole course of the railroad, he heaped up a pyramid of oaths designed to blast all railroads for ever from the earth. Seven years he had labored as Yardmaster at Windsor, after three years of personally driving every spike that held the U. P. to the ground—seven years a Yardmaster, while wet-nosed boys whom he had taught railroading had been promoted above him. Was he superintendent of even the measliest division on the road? Was he even assistant-superintendent? He who had killed ten thousand Indians on the right of way, thrown over his shoulder fifty thousand tons of mountain, bolted down a hundred thousand rails?

He was not. Only whelps who knew not a frog-spike from a Johnson-bar were set in authority over their begetter. And then they pushed the U. P. into the Ophir and killed better men than they. Vincent would serve the railroad no day longer. It was misbegotten and heretical and damned. Let it all slide into the river, ties and ballast, rails and rolling stock and superintendent. He was done. He was through. . . . Till at last the relief train was in with the injured, the wrecker was sent out, and Vincent could go home. He looked into the baggage room where the doctor and Father Tierney bent over the dying. They all died who worked for the railroad, and they got no honor of it.

He dropped into Pat McNamara's for a moment before facing the clamor of a wife who had seen her

supper spoil. An hour later he was singing down the middle of the street to Jake Cartright's. Still later, damning the railroad from the highest peak in heaven, he started home. He passed the widow Farrand's, and inspiration came.

The friend of his heart! Father Tierney still lived there till his flock, who had at last built a church, should find money for a parish house. Good Father Tierney! But a fool, for serving the railroad by ministering to its dying. Good Father Tierney who loved contention and above all things a laugh. Now would be the greatest laugh in all the world since the angels roared over Lucifer who was cast out to hell. Holy mother of God, what a laugh!

Vincent stamped his way to the priest's room. Damning the matches that scorched his fingers, he pulled out drawers, rifled boxes, tore the curtain from the closet, stripped the bed, till at last he found the box that held the newly washed chasuble and linen for tomorrow's mass. A saint's day it was, by the scarlet cross, and a martyr at that. St. Vincent Malooth who offered up his life for the railroad! He pulled the chasuble over his shoulders and donned as many of the lacy garments as he could find. The cap—holy towel of St. Veronica, where was the cap, the—the beretta?

He staggered back to the street and went singing toward Cartright's. This was Father Malooth on his way to mass. All the angels in heaven were laughing at him till their sides ached. He stopped at a hitching rail and shouted for Windsor Springs to observe him. Jake Cartright's and the Bonanza Bar emptied round him a crowd that roared approval. He sang *Come Where My Love Lies Dreaming* for them, and they joined the chorus, and he preached to them.

"You will be witness," he shouted, "that Father Vincent Malooth, the atheist, wins the war forever from Father Tierney."

"Find him," the crowd yelled, "go find Father Tierney."

Vincent blessed them with an upraised hand and put himself at the head of the procession—find Father Tierney—he would find him, clap him on the back, tell him how the devils and the angels were all laughing together. To Pat's, to the depot, to wherever he might be!—the crowd filling up behind him. . . . At the construction company, Tom Whitaker had worked late over the plans for the new bank. He emerged just as the procession reached him and saw Vincent drunk in the trappings of Father Tierney. Tom's gaze traveled rapidly the length of the street. The priest was not yet in sight—maybe he could be spared the shame. He caught Vincent by one shoulder and flamed toward the crowd.

"For shame," he said. "Damn you for a drunken sot, Vincent. Get the rest of you out of sight——" a two-barreled derringer appeared in his hand—"and I'll shoot the first of you that says a word to the Father."

Vincent collapsed into the dust, weeping. The crowd jeered but hurried into the nearest bar, awed by the gambler's wrath and reputation. Tom gave his captive a shoulder into the office. Vincent fell asleep at once behind the counter and Tom was forced to tug the vestments off him without help. He folded them carefully along the creases, wrapped them in an Omaha newspaper, and went out to find the priest, wondering how a Protestant could best tell him of the sacrilege.

Vincent awoke in the rear room of the office,

stretched out on a pile of stage-cushions. He laid his head against the counter and prayed for grace to die. Father Tierney! the best friend a misbegotten Irishman ever had. He was still mortifying his soul when he heard the door of the outer-office open. His pulse stopped at the sound of Father Tierney's voice.

"It's in there he is? Thank you, Mr. Whitaker. I'll be speaking to him alone."

Vincent cowered in the corner. The Lord's voice would be no colder when Vincent Malooth faced him on Judgment morning. And now, there before him, stood the best friend a man ever had, with no frown on his face but his eyes like winter ice.

"Father," Vincent shouted, "I was a drunk man. Could I know what I was doing?"

"Not so drunk but that you could be still a blasphemer. Not so drunk you could not find a way to defile the garments of the Church, Mr. Malooth."

"Amn't I Vincent to you, Father? Father, call me Vincent if there's charity left in your veins."

"You shall be Vincent to your wife, poor soul, who must live with you. You would play a joke on your priest would you, Mr. Malooth? You've spent the years making game of the Church in all the saloons of Windsor Springs City, and so you must now do the devil's bidding to do it more spite."

"Father, I'd cross a mile of hell barefoot to have the deed back again. You know there was no evil in me against my friend."

"I'd best ask Tom for the whisky bottle to restore your sense! Friend I've been to you ever since you came to the city, Mr. Malooth, and so you profane my garments for the mass."

"For the love of God, Father——"

"Do you talk of the love of God? You've taken pride to tell me seven times a week for seven years that you're an atheist. An atheist, I must be told, who knows that the Church is but haythen superstition. So you take my chasuble and parade it in the gutters for all the sots of the city to behold. Only four chasubles have I got on earth, a red one for Saint's days, and a purple one for Lent, and a plain one, and a black one. Bought for me, Mr. Malooth, by the nickels and dimes that housewives and good men have denied themselves, and they reverent to the Church an atheist must defile——"

"Father, leave me be! Call me Vincent, Father, and you may curse me forever. I'll do anything you say, anything at all under the sun——"

"Anything an atheist can do to bring contempt against the Church."

"Anything on earth, Father, I swear it——"

"Do you not swear again when I'm about, Mr. Malooth, nor put your black tongue to a holy word."

"By my own word, then. I'll do anything you ask——"

"Do you hear that, Tom?" Father Tierney called through the partition. He fell shouting into a chair. His laughter shook the room till Vincent wondered what madness had come upon him. "Then get you out and eat a large breakfast, Vincent, my son, and fortify yourself for the day. May there be strength to me this day, too, for by night I must give you two years of instruction. For you'll be baptized by night, Vincent, lest a train run you down, a haythen, before morning."

Early Spring drove the snows far up the peaks and Jim saw all his crops in the ground long before he must go to Grouse Creek Basin. This year, this year certainly he would stamp some mark on the desert. . . . Susan shuddered at the prospect of his going.

"You'll be back before July, Jim. You must—I've got to have you." She sent Ivy Bingham far out into the yard on an errand and sank down on a kitchen chair. "I've tried to bear up, Jim. You've never had much nonsense to put up with. But—now—I've got to have you here."

"Honey, there's not a thing to be afraid of."

He tried to lull her fears asleep, desperate as he was to be at Grouse Creek. He rubbed her forehead; for a moment the mists fled from his eyes and he saw her as she was after the attrition of the years. God! he himself was forty-nine and no security yet under the sun. But Susan was not, this morning, to be reassured.

"Something lies on my heart all day long, all night long. Don't ask me what it is, Jim. I'm just afraid. There's a shadow on me. It's not the peaks, it's not the child—it's not anything. But I've got to have you with me when my time comes."

"I'll be here, honey." It would take him twice more across the desert that lay between him and his ranch. She who had borne two children, and the first of them on the desert trail—why should she be terrified by the coming of a third, at home, with the doctor at hand and all the old wives of the valley?

"All I can stand even if you're here. . . . I'm frightened, Jim. I know they won't fall on me, but oh, this country—peaks and peaks and peaks, out there—in the sun—you can't get away from them."

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He shook his head. It was beyond his understanding.

The snow was hardly gone out of Ophir Canyon when there were men at work there and along the southern hills. He rode out to them one April day, amid the diffident green of young leaves. The Ophir in yellow flood, the air musical with ten thousand birds, it was a day for assurance and for hope. But Jim suddenly felt some heaviness about his heart, suddenly felt on the threshold of understanding Susan. It was as though he had stretched out his hand to pick an apple from a tree and found neither apple nor tree, but his fingers closing on empty air.

"Great Western," the surveyors told him. "They're going to see if they can run a ditch down out of Ophir to water them hills to the South."

It was, he understood, the Great Western Water Company, a new activity of the new First National, which was in itself a new phase of Whitaker's and McNamara's construction company. Formed last year, it had brought a pipe-line down from Windsor Canyon to supply water to the city. There were now eight thousand people round Hi-Yi's springs, and they purposed to be a city. . . . In a few days Hi-Yi himself, in a linen duster, driving a buckboard with a seat on springs high above the wheels, came out to offer Jim stock in the new irrigation enterprise of the Great Western.

"God Almighty!" Hi-Yi said, frankly admiring. "Who ever seen ranch-gates painted red—painted a-tall? Who ever seen ground plowed between trees? If you don't look a Leland Stanford ranch, Jim, i-God I never seen one."

Jim grunted. "So you're back with Whitaker and

McNamara?" His sneer pictured Hi-Yi crawling on his belly for favors. Years since, his partners had milked him dry and forced him out of the construction company. Now he was back, serving them gladly, wagging his tail when they kicked him.

"Listen, Jim, there's millions in it. Take that water out over them hills and you'll turn 'em green with all the crops in the world. Thousands and thousands of settlers, Jim—more'n the U. P. could haul in a year. A dollar'll breed double-eagles like worms in a dog."

Jim did not even bother to refuse him, only glowered and was silent. Some hours Hi-Yi wasted his breath, following Jim from field to barn and on to the sawmill, pouring out his eloquence in vain. Amos Bingham joined the procession, envious and mournful.

"I'd give my last dollar to get in on it," Amos lamented, "only I ain't got a dollar. I never had. All my life I've stunk with sweat and my face has been grinded into the desert. I've wore myself out tryin' to mint a dollar from the land, I've broke myself on all the sagebrush in the world. But God's had it in for me. I've been a licked man from the day I was born."

Hi-Yi rose to the chance. "You'll have a crop in the Fall, won't you? Well, every dollar you put in the Great Western will bring you in more dollars than a bushel of wheat brings kernels when she's sown. It's your chance to ketch up with your luck, Amos. You see the First National, Whitaker and McNamara, they'll lend you money on your crop."

"Yah," Amos said, bitter tears making his throat husky. "Maybe all told I've got three hundred in wheat and corn and garden stuff—that's all I and two sons can raise with the sweat of our brow on the desert

these big men leave us farm. Well, three hundred, Mr. Abbey here's got first call on that, and after him, Herman Kleinfeld—ketch that Dutch swindler extendin' a note ten minutes—and after him all the store-keepers in Windsor Springs City. And where's flour for the Winter comin' from, and clothes for seven kids, even if they don't wear shoes? A poor man's licked before he starts."

Later, Tom Whitaker himself rode out to try where Hi-Yi had failed. An elegant gentleman he remained, splendid in silks and woollens from the East, portlier, slower in his ways. His dignity had always been a little insecure in Jim's presence. Jim's height and strength disturbed him, but more potent than these was his native contempt. . . . Tom made his offer: expansion meant wealth, and Jim might share in it. Under the words Jim used answering him, he grew distressed. The man might be fool enough to refuse the plain gift of wealth a second time, however his refusal might inconvenience the bank in its expansion. But might he not be a courteous fool?

Tom prepared for a departing jibe. "I think you'll live to be sorry, Mr. Abbey." He envisioned the Great Western poised like an eagle over all the West.

"You mean I'll lose money. Losing money means I'll be sorry." Jim reached for the words to carry his loathing to this little man. "I know you. I know how men like you make fortunes. Right now your bank has got neither the money this canal will be built from, nor the canal it will build, nor the land it will water. So, you'll sell stock to poor men to build the canal and lend others money on their land to buy stock, and you'll bring in nesters to take up land and you'll give them mortgages to buy water. And one day

you'll have land, stock, and canal, and they'll be out in the cold."

He looked down from his height at the portly little man in tailored clothes. He hunched his shoulders at him. "You robbed Hi-Yi Windsor and now he licks your hand. You'll rob Adam Green, who took his place, till you own his store and pension him off. Some day you and McNamara will be biting each other's throats till one of you is top-dog and the other's licked. . . . You live like dogs. I know a cur when I see him."

Jim strode away to his barns, for the lust to lay hands on Tom Whitaker had all but overpowered him. And Tom, contemptuous of his contempt, walked to the hovel that housed the Kleinfelds, for Herman had shown a willingness to buy stock in the Great Western.

Susan saw and understood. But she had no impulse any longer to reproach her husband. That night, suffocated with tenderness from imagining the quicksands in his heart, she flung her arms about him and cried on his shoulder. "Don't you be troubled, Jim. Don't you question yourself any more. We're what God makes us, and I wouldn't change you if I could."

Next day he turned out all the workmen at the mill, all the Kleinfelds and the Bingham, Pemberton, and even a tramp who strayed through along the ties—to build a stout wire corral where his land touched the railroad siding at the south. A few days later a train backed into that siding and three hundred longhorn cattle were herded down the ramps into the new corral.

Jim's heart flushed with a new courage. He caught Pemberton to his shoulder. "There's a herd for Grouse Creek, son. There'll be a hundred thousand

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of them when you grow up to them. It's the finest cattle range in all the world."

The new courage ebbed away. He realized that his last resource was bound up in those cattle. Grouse Creek, the shadowy mansion, all the future of the house of Abbey lowed and trampled dust inside those wires. Well, let it. The risk was sure. And Tom Whitaker and his fellows had still thought him so formidable that they had come to offer him an unsought share in their carrion.

All Saturday afternoon Pemberton ranged the streets of Windsor Springs City looking for town-boys to lick. He added some half dozen victories to his Iliad, including Hop Bagley, the son of the man who had come from the great city of St. Louis to be cashier of the First National. Then Jeff Farrand, a head taller but often licked, gathered together a gang to annihilate the invader. Pemberton barricaded himself with packing cases in the alley behind the Dutchman's restaurant, whence he was defending himself with stones when stout Lottie Schmidt, the Dutchman's wife, rescued him.

"You will get yourself killed, Pemberton," she scolded him, as she washed his bruises and fed him doughnuts as big as saucers. "Ach, you are beaten up like a raw hamburger. You will stay here, do you hear me, Pemberton? till your father comes ready to drive back home. I will find a bottle of gherkins you should take to your good mother. And that poor baby—he is no bedder?"

Pemberton fell asleep on a sack of sugar under the counter and waked during the late afternoon lull when only one of the dozen tables was occupied. Vincent Malooth, cursing the railroad whose crews kept a yardmaster at work on Saturday afternoon, had come in for coffee and pie to make up for the lunch he had missed. Presently Aaron Dunlap, the blacksmith, wandered in from McNamara's bar and lingered to

chat with him. Their jovial contention wakened Pemberton. He lay planning battles that would kill Hop Bagley and Jeff Farrand, paying no heed to the debate at the table, till he heard his father's name.

"——and I'd say of all the fools for luck," Aaron Dunlap was declaiming, with a solemnity that ran grooves along his dull face, "Jim Abbey is the hell-roaringest. Look you, Vincent—of all the damn fool jobs a man ever went into is there a crazier one than this—this what-do-you-call-'em—this Grouse Creek? And the very year that's set to bust him wide open, make a beggar out of him, why along comes the worst drouth ever knowed, and him with the best irrigated farm in the Territory. Man, he'll sell every stalk of grass for a dollar. God——" Aaron pounded the table—"no blacksmith ever had luck like that."

"Mrs. Schmidt," Vincent roared, "just step into Pat's, will you? and get us a pitcher of dark beer—that's the darling. Do you not be troublin' yourself, Aaron. There's no fool like a proud fool, and if Jim Abbey makes a few dollars out of our sufferin' in the drouth, it'll all be flung back into that desert. But we must mind our manners, you and I, us poor and common folk. 'Jim Abbey' says we, as though we was his equal—when we know, Aaron, it's touching our hats he'd have us, and 'Mr. Abbey,' or 'Prince Abbey' or 'My Lord Abbey.' "

"I touch my hat to nobody."

"Yes, and ye know, that's why Jim Abbey ain't had an easy day in the West. He'd like to tread on our coats, Aaron, you and me. He'd have us standin' on our toes and hangin' our heads, till he give us lief to speak. He come near pullin' it off, too. I mind four or five years ago it was Mr. Abbey this, Mr.

Abbey that, and Pat and Tom Whitaker fair beggin' him to throw in with 'em—them, the smartest men in the Territory. We heard tell how he was the richest man about, and the biggest and strongest too. How he'd beat all the rest of us to a good thing—and nothin' would stop him short of death——”

“Yah,” Aaron sneered above his glass of Dopplebrau, “if my youngest kid didn't have more sense than to try to farm a desert—flingin' money that's been took from our skins into a hundred miles of sage and rattlesnakes——”

“Cows it is now—cows that's to eat the sagebrush and greasewood and no doubt the rattlesnakes. A good brand of beef 'twill be that turns rattlers into sirloins,” Vincent guffawed, “and he'll make himself a great man at last when he swells up like a poisoned pup from eatin' his own beef.”

“It ain't business. It takes a fool to turn down a million dollars with Tom Whitaker, it takes a fool to let a farm and a good sawmill business run themselves, but it takes a God's own fool to plow the desert.”

They were roaring together. “Lord Abbey,” Vincent managed to wheeze, “Lord Abbey, lord of all the fools in the Territory—him that's a great man we must tip our hats to, Aaron—the king fool of Windsor Springs——”

Pemberton dashed wildly out from behind the counter, across the room, out into the street. “Mother of God!” Vincent gasped. “It's his own child!”

The boy's heart had been cramped in steel bands. His world had been turned topside down. It was characteristic of Pemberton that he could not cry. Instead he felt sick, so sick that he could not see the street. Later, when Jim's wagon creaked over the

road toward Ophir Valley, he stared at his father as though he could read inside his head. He had grown up to look at Jim as at one who had all power and glory in his hands. Fool! they had said. Pemberton lusted to kill them. He was seeing himself astride a horse, riding into the Dutchman's restaurant, drawing his Colt's, and calmly, contemptuously shooting Vincent Malooth and Aaron Dunlap through their heads.

There had already been six weeks of drouth, when little James was born early in July. Jim, riding his best horse from Grouse Creek, passed diminished water-holes and knew they would be dry when he returned. He reached the valley in good season, and saw Susan through two days of agony. Doctor and midwife attended her, and all the women of the valley called to offer what they might, but only the last farthing of despair brought her through. A day and a half Jim was on his knees at the bedside, while the child was abandoned to Anna Kleinfeld and Sarepta Bingham. This too was to be seen through. He had carried her through the desperation of the trail; he must carry her through this. And at last she struggled upward from unconsciousness and looked at him with awareness in her eyes.

Father Tierney was at the door when, after two days, Jim came into the sunlight. He saw on Jim's sunken cheeks the tinge of triumph. "I've had no peace, Jim," he said. "I'm glad for you." Jim stood erect, silently daring the priest to touch his arm with the hand that had reached for it.

Sue could not nurse the child, but Jed Wills's wife, whose child had died within the month, was glad of

the changeling ecstasy. Little James proved to have only a faltering grasp on life. Even his wailing was thin, and in the heat, his skin stretched tight above the little ribs that held it out. As some kind of strength came back to his mother, she held him always in bed with her in the hope that from her own sluggish blood he might take some strength. Not love nor prayer nor anxiety could fan life higher in him. By night she could not sleep, lest he die without her arms holding him.

She waked Jim one night and commanded him to ride to Windsor Springs City for a minister. "He's dying, Jim, he's dying and his little soul—oh, Jim, he hasn't been baptized!"

He quieted her, pointing out that the child was sleeping as quietly as ever, but in the morning she renewed the demand. Father Tierney's horse showing at the end of the avenue of trees, Jim suggested that the priest be asked to do the service.

"That infidel!"

"He's a good man, Sue. He's good—good clean through. He's my one friend."

"The baby would go straight to hell."

She collapsed in a tempest of sobbing. Jim rode back to town with the priest, and a legitimate divine came back with him to sprinkle water on the child's forehead and so assuage the curse of Adam. Little James lay limp in his mother's arms and could not so much as whimper at the discomfort.

The priest came often during the next few weeks. He knew that his friend was beyond the touch of man, that Jim's lonely and arrogant heart was not to be strengthened or comforted by any one under heaven. But he would be with him when he could. Jim, frantic

to be back at Grouse Creek, tortured by drouth and love and fear—Jim throwing back his shoulders against the tides of God.

They walked through Jim's fields by twilight, when if there was no breeze at least the steely sun was gone. Desolation lay on Ophir Valley, and only Jim's farm had been preserved entire. Dust overlay even his watered crops, and everywhere else it was like a heavy snow. The creeks were shrunk to stagnant shallows.

"A terrible place to bring a child into the world," Father Tierney said. "We cannot cover up the desert, Jim. 'Twill show through when it will, to mock us for the trial. . . . Who's that on the hill?"

"Bingham."

"Amos—with a gun?"

"There've been ditches dug to meet mine. We woke up one morning and found them. I've got Bingham out to see there's no water stolen."

"It's men's lives here, Jim. Would you be the only one in the valley to live through?"

"It's mine. I was here first and I got it. It's me live or them. The Ophir's their river. They lead little ditches out of it and in a good year that's enough. They can't see ahead. They know there's always drouth one year or the next, and they know they could dam the Ophir and be ready for it. But they won't fight, Father, only yelp like curs and say no man can stand against the desert. They let the Great Western file on the river and start to dam it for the hills. Now they'll starve and the hills will be green—or they'll pay through the nose to Whitaker and McNamara. Or they can try to steal the water of a man."

There was the lash of a rattan reed beating a sheet of paper. Jim leaped aside, thrust the priest back-

ward, and hurled a stone at something that writhed in mottled coils, dust white in the road. He ground the snake's head with his heel and opened his knife to cut the rattles from the lashing tail.

"Pemberton wants them," he explained. "He's got a row of them nailed across the barn. . . . They come down with the drouth. Porcupines and skunks and badgers walk across my fields. I'm lucky to have a chicken left. The desert comes down and sits in my green fields."

To the tortures of the Summer was added Herman Kleinfeld. The creek was so low that only a trickle ran from the dam down his millrace. He had had to fire up the ancient scrap-iron boiler they had used years before under the pressure of railroad work—and to buy coal for it. Herman was in a fury against God and man. . . . The mill must be moved to town. Timber had been quite cleaned out of the gulches about Ophir. It cost so much to haul a log across those miles of stumps that the profit was eaten up before that log was sawed. It cost more to haul a plank to town than he could sell it for after he got it there. They must cut down expenses. They must go where there was timber. They must raise money to expand.

Jim's temper, always these days under a slack leash, slipped quite away. "Keep out of my reach," he roared. "God's name, I can't think about planks. You damned bounty-jumper—my wife and my son—I've got them to think about."

"But Mr. Appey——"

Jim shook him by the shoulders till the color drained

from his fat cheeks. "Let me alone—keep away from me or I'll tear you apart."

"I will not abide it," Herman shouted, two rods away. "Will I let a madman bangtrupt us both? I will do as I say."

No one's self-control prospered under the drouth. That the valley held itself no more easily than he, Jim had frank evidence, one day, when a bullet ricochettled from the ground a few feet from his side, and a half mile back some one was running from clump to clump of oakbrush. Under the assault of wind and sun and dust, cheeks grew tight, eyes sank deep into their sockets, fingers trembled like seed-pods ready to burst. Sue was up at last, but age had come upon her. Nor could she, for all her vigil, in any way fan life higher in her son. He lay, naked, under a net in the least feverish corner of the house. He wailed constantly, in a peevish monotone that had no strength, and heat rash mottled his body.

By day Sue had the distraction of Ivy Bingham in the kitchen and Mrs. Wills staunchly attendant on James, of Pemberton and Ruth to be worried about lest rattlers or worse attack them in the yard, of all the myriad anxieties of drouth. But by night there was only Jim and the baby.

They stood above the bed where James had at last fretted himself asleep. "He's going to die," she said dispassionately. "And when he does—Jim, I don't think I'll live through it."

The desert that had trapped him rose naked in his mind. His years had been poured down the river and he was alone, without them. "There's no dying to be talked of, Sue," he managed to say. "I think and think. I don't see any way we could have gone but

what we took. We've got to—to stand against it. Just hang on, Sue—just say nothing on earth can get past us. Nothing can lick us if we won't be licked." Drouth was in his heart as well, and knowledge that the shadowy terrors that possessed her were beyond his power to root out or to take upon himself.

Kleinfeld, on errands to the house, would pause beside the baby's crib to listen to his fretfulness. Honest tears coursed down his cheeks. Sometimes he would gruffly lift the child and hold it to his cheek, singing some fragment of German pathos. James quieted in his arms as in no others. . . . But as the Summer withered on, James's wails sank below a whisper.

Jim had dug a grave under the largest of his walnuts on the hillside. The parson had again ridden those sun-baked miles from the Boiling Springs, and after his brief prayer and longer sermon, had to be fed in the kitchen. Jim, rock-cold, left to Bingham the obligation of covering the child's body with the dusty clay, that he might stay at Susan's side. The house was filled with the women of the valley, stooped and wrenched and withered, but made a little vivid by gathering together. Labor in the desert had dulled them to listlessness, but a funeral wakened in them a semblance of life. Their eyes found interest again; grief was an excitement, a relief, something holiday and enjoyable.

Susan had not spoken since the child died; Jim had given up hope that she would weep. Yet her stunned listlessness ebbed when at last the grave was closed and the house whispered with the talk of all her sisters in mortality. Though she sat nerveless, sanity had

come back to her. After some time she rose and went into the bedroom. She returned, still dry-eyed, with her arms full of baby-clothes.

Anna Kleinfeld was big with still another child. Susan went to her where she sat, sobbing in a friendly way beside Sarepta, and heaped the garments on her knees. "Take them, Anna," Sue said.

"Oh, Mrs. Abbey," Anna's tears came in a livelier gust. "You mustn't talk so. You'll need them. There'll be—there'll be—oh, Mrs. Abbey, if you wouldt only cry once——"

"I'll never need them again. . . . Some of them were Pemberton's and Ruthie's and some were new. I want you to have them, Anna."

Jim was watching her intently. She seemed more composed than she had for months. Later, Father Tierney came, after what he had judged a decent interval for the minister and the neighbors to be gone. Jim, seeing him kneel at the mound, stirred uneasily lest Susan's wounds be added to. But Susan looked unresentfully at the infidel beside her child's grave.

"Let him pray," she said.

Jim caught her eyes. They were still dark with the Summer's agony, but he saw in them a new, strange peace that quieted him with a comfort he did not understand. He did not know what could bring peace to her, nor how, in the desert drouth, she could be resigned. But he saw that despair and rebellion had gone away from her forever.

The drouth made an end to Amos Bingham's struggles. His last sparse, half-grubbed fields were only baked earth. He came to Jim after much cursing.

"You take over my quarter," he said, "and if there's anything comin' to me, you can give me it or not—just as you say. I'm done. I won't try no longer to lick a country that's got me licked before I start. I'll stick on with you. You tell me what to do and I'll do it. I guess me and my folks can make a livin' off of you—if we can't there ain't much else I can think of. You had all the luck I ain't. It's only right we threw in with you."

Jim hurried out Sam and Amos, Jr., to plow under the ridgy, sage-speckled land that had finally vanquished their father. Another year would find it ready to his use. The Bingham boys worked well; they were admirable servants. From the elder Amos he expected little except complaint of God's usages and such hired-man's tasks as stupidity could not botch. For, given a fair chance, Amos would ruin whatever he set his hand to. One more victim to alkali and sun—conquered by the desert, a predestinate failure because he was unfit. The sun and the wind and the desert covered over those who had not the stuff of men within them.

But all these weeks he had been separated from the desert where his own warfare went on. Mingled with his fears for Susan and the child had been the knowledge that he had killed a third of his herd, driving it to Grouse Creek Basin, and that a third of every herd that passed over that trailless waste must die in the same way. It would take years to scratch a pathway across those shelves and rubble-heaps. Years! and the sun went westward very fast. He must be for ever at the desert, holding it back with his shoulders from the minute oasis he had cleared. So that the child was but a week in its grave when he rode up the first gulch that began the desolate highway to Grouse Creek. He had

five men there, now, building shacks and corrals, guarding the cattle from wild beasts, making ready the way the great ranch was to follow. He joined their sweat and labor under the desert sun.

When he came back to Ophir Valley, the drouth had lifted, the Autumn rains had come, and water was running again down Herman's spillway. The desert-dwellers had gathered in the charred remnants of their crops and were plowing under the blasted fields, for next year's promise. Amos and his sons, with help available for a few pence, were filling tight Jim Abbey's barns with the yield of his victorious fields. It was a priceless harvest: fruit and grain inconceivably fine after the drouth.

It was sunset when he reached the valley, and the mill was hushed. He hardly glanced at it but gathered Susan in his arms, with Ruth skipping beside him. The next day he missed the mill's familiar whine and drone. It seemed curiously forsaken. He saw no wagon-loads of planks climbing the hill toward Windsor and no loads of logs coming down the gulches. But he supposed that the machinery had broken down and that the thrifty Herman had laid off his force till it might be repaired. Busy with the harvest, preparing for the wealth its sale would bring him, directing the Bingham and the hired hands, he did not bother to stroll over and investigate.

But that night he did walk up the hill. The lumber sheds were empty. The log-pile was only littered bark and the supports that had held it up. Wagons, harness, all implements and accessories were gone, and the stable was deserted. The mill itself was stripped of saws, belts, pulleys, everything but the roof and posts. Angry and disturbed, he strode on to the cabin and

the supernumerary shacks into which Kleinfeld's house-keeping had overflowed. They, too, were empty. All the Kleinfeld possessions, to the last thread, had been cleared away, and the graded series of towheads that customarily quarreled underfoot were gone. The empty hovels recalled the squalor that Herman's miserliness had imposed upon his family. The empty shed in which the oldest boys had lived was hardly distinguishable from the empty chicken coop.

Jim strode back to the house. "What's happened to the mill?" he demanded of Susan. "Where has Kleinfeld gone?"

"Why, he moved the mill to Windsor three weeks ago," Susan said. "Wasn't that what you wanted? He told me you had the site picked out."

"Sure," Pemberton confirmed her, eagerly. "It's thirteen miles up Windsor canyon, where that little creek comes in. He told me all about it."

"What did he tell you?"

Susan was distraught. "Jim! What on earth? He said you'd bought miles of timber in the peaks east of Windsor and this country was played out. He said you knew everything he was doing."

He rode the next day to Windsor. All the time he was bargaining for his crops, he kept watch for yellow heads bobbing among barrels and boxes, but saw none. Inquiries revealed only that Kleinfeld had set up a mill where Pemberton had reported it, thirteen miles up Windsor canyon. There were no little Kleinfelds anywhere in the city—Herman had moved his family with him to the new mill.

The sawmill, Jim realized, was all that had supported his tireless assault on Grouse Creek Basin. Those precarious sheds, those cramped and thirsty

clearings, that growing herd of longhorns—all those were upheld by the mill he had sneered at. If something had, now, gone wrong with it!

He was resolved, the next day, to ride again to Windsor and on up the canyon till he came to the new mill. He would confront Herman and demand an explanation. But, that day, he could not leave the farm, where buyers were already tapping the huge granaries, and the next day Brett Warren came riding over the hills to see him. In all Windsor there was hardly a man whom Jim despised more than Warren. He was a Southerner, a North Carolinian, whom the railroad had imported to take care of its law business, and Jim divined that in North Carolina he had not sat with gentlemen. His courtliness was too effusive, his drawl too langourous, his pronounciation too liquid. He had, no doubt, thrived mightily on the law suits of freed niggers, and in Windsor he was a fiery, unreconstructed Democrat who talked a great deal about honor and the code.

Entering Susan's parlor, Warren bowed ceremoniously to Jim and waited, with an offensive deference, till Jim took a chair. Then he talked, liquidly, about drouth and Windsor and the great days of the West, while Jim fumed and tried to bring the meeting to its purpose. Until at last he growled, "What's brought you here, Mr. Warren? You didn't drive fifteen miles to talk to me."

Mr. Warren did not like starkness. He spread his hands deprecatingly. "Just a matter of business, Mr. Abbey. There are some notes of yours—they have been renewed from time to time. No doubt you've found it merely inconvenient to take them up hitherto. . . ."

On and on, delicately, trepidantly. . . . "I am representing Mr. Kleinfeld. He feels that he can no longer, in justice to himself and his family, burden his business with the weight of unpaid obligations. . . . Now that he has moved the mill to Windsor Springs, the time seems opportune to ask for a settlement. . . . He feels that you should pay the many outstanding notes in full or, in fairness, make no protest when he forecloses the mortgage on the mill and all the appurtenances thereto. . . ."

Again, for a moment, Jim caught a glimpse of the nine years through which the profits of the mill had flowed into his house and farm and into the dream of Grouse Creek. The glimpse faded before a vision of Herman Kleinfeld. Nine years of fawning—nine years of blessing his benefactor and meditating his treachery against him. The mill—his mill—that supported farm and Grouse Creek.

". . . Inasmuch as his extension of credit to you has more than wiped out your equity in the property—has been, I may say, a benevolence directed purely by his great esteem for you—in short, might seem to a court little more than a charity——"

Thundering in Jim's mind above the rage that hurled him out of his chair was the admonition, not in your own house, a guest! But Brett Warren was not aware of conventions known only to gentlemen—and ran desperately out of the house, leaped into his buckboard, and lashed the team into a run. Afterward he wondered whether he had screamed.

The years left little mark on Ophir Valley. Slowly the nesters widened their fields across it and the desert withdrew before them, signing a wary armistice. The Territory budded more Ralstons, more Windsor Springs, and the buds divided and redivided. The flood of westward-moving America left its deposit as steadily in the vicinity of Jim Abbey as elsewhere. Two miles down the valley from his house, the railroad built a frame station, painted it a flaming carmine, and called it Blaine—its imagination going no farther than the plumed knight who was not uninterested in railroads. There was a general store, too, where the wagon-road to Ralston crossed the canyon-trail, and a one-room schoolhouse for the valley children. Pemberton rode a chestnut roan mustang to the school, and spent his days ruling it.

No boy stood up to Pemberton twice, and as he grew older teachers as well sometimes felt his fists. Pemberton knew the straight way to dominance: whom you would control, you hammered till he submitted. They brought Jim word of his son's viciousness, and he conscientiously thrashed him. Discipline, he considered, was a parent's duty, and in truth this rebel violence in his son alarmed him. He would find the boy lashing a balky horse or cursing when a plow bucked in his hands. He would stand apart, troubled by this strange behavior of his son, and then dispassionately beat him. God directed that an angry spirit

be curbed, and Jim Abbey knew the wisdom of the Lord's counsel.

Pemberton, shooting up to his father's height, was doing a man's labor on the farm years before his time. With the mill gone, there was no money to hire all the tramps that wandered down the railroad track. Jim's enormous energy had always burned under forced draught: he saw no reason why any one's else should fail. Amos Bingham withered into unprotesting obedience, and Sam and young Amos never dreamed that Mr. Abbey's will might be less sovereign than God's. He drove them all against the unyielding earth, and he drove Pemberton no less tirelessly. He put upon the boy every strain he had himself assumed, till there was no duty in all those hundreds of acres that the boy had not mastered. And, Jim saw, Pemberton flourished under the discipline. His shoulders hardened like the fundamental rock of the hills, and below his narrow waist his thighs and calves were as lissom as a mustang's.

The orchards fulfilled Jim Abbey's prophecies. In the Spring their blossoms were a white and rose-pink spray along a mile of hillside. In the Autumn, their fruit stacked many sheds with opulent, odorous cases. It went out over the Territory, along the U. P. to Omaha and eastward, with Jim's name stenciled on white pine. Jim walked among his trees, omnipotent, hacking off branches that marred their symmetry, pruning them so that the load would be full-sized and full-flavored, cutting down and replacing with young trees those that were less than perfect. Let them live that were fit, and those that were not, let them be blasted and torn out—Amos Bingham's of the orchard, that the desert would deal with in its own time.

Elsewhere in Ophir Valley, the desert's armistice strained the nesters to the utmost. Their fields were unkempt, pitiful, miserly, splotched with alkali and littered with the debris of the warfare. Their unpainted shacks rotted in the sun and were half-hidden in rank weeds. And the desert sent against their crops its manifold blights—black beetles, crickets, rust, mildew, and hail. Only within Jim Abbey's fences, it seemed, was the warfare ended victoriously. Sleek Jerseys grazed in his lowland pastures. Hard winter wheat, too vigorous for the desert's blights, drew straight lines across his hillsides. There were bees in squat, whitewashed hives, a kitchen garden green and odorous stretching westward from Sue's windows, a dooryard where Sue was happy tending meadowsweet and pinks and hollyhocks, fragrant in the evenings when the blue shadows crept across it from the hills. There were giant ricks of hay and straw, roofed over, graying in the sun. And daylong noises of a farm: guinea fowl creaking like rusty gates, the crackle of ducks who swam the shallows of the canal and upended themselves after water-slugs, flocks of Leghorns and Orpingtons penned by themselves in a corner of the pasture, perhaps a new calf bleating by the willows. Yes, here at Blaine, Jim Abbey had won his battle.

It was well, for at Grouse Creek the battle went on unceasingly, and now there was only the farm to uphold it. Every cent that he could wring from the land at Blaine, he hurried across the upland trails to his front lines in the desert. As soon as the snows unlocked the canyons in the Spring, he rode there with such help as he could pay for. He built stockades for his cattle. He tightened and multiplied his sheds. And, always and always, he pushed out his ditches

farther from the one big creek. The herds he took over that grazed trail died in blizzard or drouth, went feral in the uplands, were cut down by wolves and cougars and coyotes. Many vanished without trace, like water drying on the rock. And the desert crept back upon him. Sheds and stockades were crushed by snowdrifts, Spring run-offs poisoned his ploughed land with sand and lye, locusts settled upon his meager crops and ate them utterly away. He was pounding a granite ledge with a mallet of sand! . . . But it would be done! He would tame this land. Though it gave way never an inch before him, though his cattle died and his barns fell in and sage and greasewood and aloes grew through his floors and rattlesnakes nested in the very thresholds of his sheds—yet would he batter down the land prostrate before him.

But Sue no longer concerned herself about Jim's death-feud with the desert. She had found contentment in the valley. Pemberton's violence seemed to her only the tumult of her own flesh. Ruth grew in comeliness, a sweet and singing child whose laughter was the glint of sun from blue water. One by one in turn the Bingham girls came to do Sue's heavier work, and the rest was solace. She sewed clothes, braided rugs, skimmed milk, gathered in the eggs. She baked great loaves whose perfume filled the cool-room. She planted new slips and seeds in her garden, from which she clipped the lemon-verbena leaves to be made into sweet pillows. She saved ashes from the fire-wood to leach soap. And when the crops came in there were prolonged ecstasies of preparation for the Winter. She filled the summer kitchen with vast stores of pickles, conserves, jellies, jams. A large barrel was filled with corning beef; there were smaller ones, too,

with eggs in sawdust, and pigs' feet slowly pickling in brine. In a tiny smoke-house she cured hams and bacons, making Ruth or Pemberton mount guard over the fire.

And all this was solace, forgetfulness. Jim no longer saw her eyes darken with fear. She no longer needed to ward away the peaks, but walked beneath them without fear. When she went to James's grave, under its own trees on the hillside, it was with serene remembrance, gently sad but covered by the sunlight of unforgotten Summers that had come between.

They sat together in the evenings, under a swinging lamp that could be pulled down from the ceiling. Newspapers came to them from Omaha, and now from Windsor, and there were the religious weeklies Sue had always read. They remembered the old West that had already vanished. They counted the ease that had come to them and, always, looked forward to the years ahead.

"Pemberton will marry," Sue would say, "oh, when he's twenty-one. They don't wait long in this country. Will he build a house here on the farm, Jim?"

"We'll all be in Grouse Creek in a few years, honey. Who in heaven's name will he marry? There's no one here fit for our kind."

"He'll think different. And Ruth! Jim, we'll send her to Omaha to school. We can afford that, can't we?"

But he would only growl. How could they afford anything? He grudged the oats that went into his barns. The bank at Omaha that was carrying him, that alone enabled him to keep on at Grouse Creek, was a heavy burden and a sharp master. The interest he paid it ate at his funds. And there, in the Basin,

the land drank up every cent he had. But Susan sewed and hummed and dreamed about her children.

. . . Was this Susan only forty? She was stout and bent and her skin had tanned to a coarse and freckled brown. His mother had been less withered at sixty. But Susan—why she had been ground between the years till one would forget that girlhood had ever touched her? Desert sun had bleached her hair and drained half the color from her eyes. Dusty and stiff! The land had had its will of her . . . and of him. He stared at the gray that frosted his hair. One might have laid a finger in that cleft between his eyebrows. It was an aging man he saw frowning at him from the mirror. The years had slipped away like an echo. He was still here, earth-bound on his valley farm, and no great house built, not even a future made secure—only incessant labor certain. Only the desert to be fought, again and always, unceasingly. Fought by an aging man, whose very fields were insecure, who had taken no hold at all on the vision that had driven him.

“No, by God!” he growled.

There were years left to him. He had driven all before him, this far. And there was Pemberton to come, young and untired, fit to take up the vision of the Abbeys and to force it on into fulfillment.

“Your Pa,” Amos Bingham said querulously to Pemberton, “he thinks it’s all his own deserts, and only his rightful due. Look at it. If they’s a farm in all the Territory the equal of this’n, I ain’t heard of it. Sure, God set it aside for him. Sure, it’s no more than what he deserves—he don’t even consider he’s had more good luck than he’s had dandruff. Lookit, everybody else in this here valley has sweat out his

soul to push up one crop in three year outen the desert. They're all pore men—and they've sweat and stunk and prayed and died for nothin'. And your Pa figures he's only got his due. He don't seem to reckonize it was Herman Kleinfeld and his sawmill made this here farm do more in fifteen year than any other will in fifty. Could I build me a farm outen all my sufferin'? Did I ever have one break of luck——"

"No," Pemberton said. "No, you never had nothin' but a blat, you old goat. You keep your God-damn tongue off my old man, or I'll lay you out." Pemberton, at fifteen, had a way with men like Amos.

Why had he permitted Susan's and Ruth's entreaties to carry him off on this holiday? At Windsor City a September day had been set apart to celebrate prosperity and to raise a noise for the new campaign for Statehood. Jim had despised the idea, but at last yielded to his wife and hitched a team to his lightest wagon at sunrise of the appointed morning. Susan was uneasy in the town with its unusual crowds, its half-mile of bricked street, its crowded buildings. But when they had passed through it to the cottonwood grove along the Windsor River where the fête was to be held, she relaxed. She smiled; a wistful graciousness bloomed in her; her eyes softened. Women from the valley gathered round her, unabashed by Jim's contempt. Pemberton and Ruth made off at once for the tents and barbecue.

He had no friends here. No one tried to talk with him or in any way break through the horny crust of his reticence. He was glad of that; they had at last learned their lesson. Let them keep their distance.

Yet some necessity urged him through the crowds, observing and despising them. Barrels of lemonade stood about. The brewery which Jake Cartright had started, and which he was about to lose to the First National, had sent out beer for all who cared to ask for it—beer in barrels and bottles everywhere. Jim foresaw the afternoon, with the men drinking themselves into a contemptibility even greater than they had by nature.

Tom Whitaker was suddenly shaking his hand and Mr.-Abbey-ing him profusely. "I trust it's prosperity for you, Mr. Abbey, as it is for us. We're putting up a new building on Fourth and Harney. We'll move into it in a few months. Four stories—the biggest in the Territory. You'll hear the speeches, later? I'll get you a seat on the platform."

Jim stepped aside, looking down on his graciousness from the Abbey height. "I wish you good day, Mr. Whitaker," he said. He wondered dimly where he could wash his hands.

That popinjay, that gambler, that gentleman! He was the loudest noise in this Statehood talk. Tom Whitaker, ex-gambler, who aspired to be first Governor of the State. That was what he would make speeches about from the platform whereon he had thought Jim Abbey might consent to sit with him.

Hi-Yi Windsor was already beery and oratorical. All had happened to Hi-Yi as Jim had foreseen. The bank had used him as bait for its real-estate speculations till his usefulness was done, and had then cast him out. Old now and racked by the heaped-up distemperatures of his years in the West, Hi-Yi lived in the back-room of the livery-stable which, securely mortgaged, the bank allowed him to keep. But he

was loyal to the great men who had let him serve them.

He followed with his eyes the verbose passage of Tom Whitaker through the throngs of the electorate-to-be. "He'll be the Governor," Hi-Yi admired, "and he'll make out first-rate. I tell you, Jim, there's been no stoppin' Tom Whitaker. He's one of them that's marked out to go far. Envy of him killed Adam Green as sure as I'm talkin' to you here."

"Tom Whitaker killed him, you mean. Swindled him out of every cent he'd made."

"Well, them that can't watch out for themselves—the world won't watch out for them."

"As he'll kill Pat McNamara, it may be, when the time comes to knife him."

Under the trees hundreds of families spread their lunches on red tablecloths. Barrels of lemonade, tons of fried chicken, children shouting, men streaking their mustaches with the foam of beer. There was a lull while gorged children slept, women drew together to rehearse their lore, and men spat sagely into the river and disputed all the problems of the hour. Later, when digestion was well begun, there were contests of all kinds: races and tests of strength and dexterity for the children, races and wrestling matches and weight-lifting for their fathers, women's races, three-legged races, sack races, potato-races—everything, Jim thought, that would give them a chance to make a noise.

Pemberton, having won all the first places within range of his years, was off somewhere to play baseball, to catch behind the bat, barefaced and bare-handed. Ruth came running to bury her face in Sue's lap, crying with the delight of having won a sack-race

with a bright blue cotton handkerchief for prize. . . . Jim wandered along the river, through the cotton-woods, across the little gullies that broke through them to the water. After the contests the crowd had adjourned to a hillside before which a platform had been erected, and Jim could see them ranged in lines along the hill and could hear them respond to Tom Whitaker or to one like him. They roared or they laughed or they hushed to some momentary pathos. They would be a State, and at once the sun would shine forever. They were a great people—they would be a great State. Statehood for a mob!

Beneath the contempt that wrung him, Jim was ill at ease. There was something in that crowd of picnickers. Had he missed something? Had they beaten him by finding something denied to him? Something, . . . something! What was he thinking about? What could he but noise and docility and offense? They seemed only an evil, only a feter. Nevertheless the distress that all day long had made him doubt himself deepened. He was a fool for coming where they were!

He had come to the flat place where the contests had been held, deserted now and ugly with all the litter of their stay. He saw a piece of steel rail that had played its part in the afternoon. From a distance he had watched the winner of the event strain and stagger to raise it with both hands five or six times above his head. Jim stirred it with his toe, stood looking at it. He stooped, grasped it at the middle, raised it in his right hand high above his head. His legs did not tremble, his arm was taut and motionless. Again and again, many times, he pushed the steel into the air.

They trooped back from the hillside intoxicated with

the commonwealth they were to be. Tom Whitaker had told them they were a State. They could look the world in the eye. History was begun. The grove was loud. Pete Cartright's brewery horses hauled up fresh kegs of beer. The women drew together, disapproving, helpless, unreconciled. All over the grove songs began to break out.

Father Tierney caught up with Jim. The priest had made a glorious day of it. Cassock discarded, he had jumped a score of times against the last who had contended, a man more than twenty years younger, and had admitted himself beaten only when he could no longer stand. He had tasted the cakes of half the women in his parish. He had made the hillside roar with a speech full of Irish proverbs. He had drunk companionable draughts of Cartright's beer. He was tired and expansive and quite rosy with the pleasure of the people.

"Oh, Jim," he groaned, "I'd give a dollar you were a young priest to say my mass for me in the morning. No muscle of mine'll stir tomorrow but I'll howl like Judas in hell."

They fell into step together, Jim shortening his stride as he would have done to Susan's. "'Tis Fall so soon," the priest said lyrically. "When the dark blue comes to the river so the foam of ripples looks like a saint's halo, then there'll be corn-shocks and cider barrels. . . . You're the beast with ten legs and seven tails, Jim, that no one could believe in till he saw you. Not you to be givin' yourself a good hour at lunch with your friends, or to crack your throat with yelling for the state that's on the way. Oh, no——"

"Statehood—give statehood to five-year-olds and naturals!"

Father Tierney's high spirits drooped. This giant man with the angry, rebellious heart—he seemed to discolor the day's innocence. With Jim Abbey at hand, it did indeed seem childish and absurd, unbecoming to grown men. The blind, the restless strength of him! The power to flagellate his own soul with the hope of things impossible under heaven, the corrosive that ate away all the chance God had given him for happiness and was still strong enough to mar the pleasure of those who walked with him.

They had been following a weed-bordered path among the trees. Jim stopped abruptly. At his feet, stretched across the path, was one who had surrendered to Jake Cartright. He slept loudly; flies walked at his mouth; a stale reek hung above him. Jim growled and, putting the toe of his boot under the sleeper's waist, shoved him into the weeds.

Father Tierney's eyes blazed. "In the name of God, Jim! He's a man." He knelt beside the man to straighten his legs and raise his head off the ground.

"Is he, Father? Have you had some evidence? Statehood—good God!"

He turned back to the grove, sent Ruth in search of Pemberton, began to fling the harness on his horses. Susan acquiesced, her laughter quiet on the instant. They drove away in the lavender twilight of early Fall. All through the grove huge fires were being lighted. Further kegs of beer were being set up. There was a sense of people moving, boys at play, meals being set up, young people wandering off in pairs through the dusk and undergrowth.

Pemberton took command of the team. Ruth slept,

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a chain of autumn flowers withering on her head. Susan was tired, but in a happy way. Against that sense of friends remembered, not even Jim's murkiness could make headway. She dreamed over the sunny day. . . . But Jim watched the light die out along the peaks, and disdained the citizenry. Scorn mounted in him, driven by that dim, inexplicable fear. He had missed nothing, nothing at all! What should he miss in this futility? Miss sweat and noise, envy and hatred, jealousy, weakness, and dishonor?

Yet the days brought no comfort. He built the farm's labor into a dam against distrust, pulling with hard fingers from the soil an assurance that he had what he wanted. ("Paint?" Amos Bingham whined. "Who ever heard of painting a cowshed? Who ever heard of cuttin' weeds in an orchard? Weeds is what the trees need to keep the sun from burnin' them up.") Here in the valley he had covered the desert over for all time, he, Jim Abbey, with the muscles of his shoulders. And beyond those dressed ranks of the peaks, on past the last defences of fertility, was Grouse Creek, where the battle still went on, where he, Jim Abbey, would bend the earth to his will in ultimate submission and would be secure forevermore.

The necessity of making all this clear to Susan, who no longer doubted nor even seemed to be aware. The need to show her how it all drove on to the one last bayonet charge against the desert, to end the war world without end. And yet he could not set in order the words that would explain, even to himself.

"Just one thing we've learned in the West, honey. And it's what we knew before we came. Hang on, stand your ground, don't let the cold steel scare you. It's all there is to any war. You stand fast and don't

let 'em drive you back, and if they do, give way slow till you can start coming back and then come on past where you were before."

And. . . . "It's my job to hang on to Grouse Creek. It's the only way. When that comes through, they'll never be able to lay a finger on an Abbey forever. We'll be able to stand against the world. It's worth all our lives, yes if we'd had to wear the same pair of shoes for thirty years. You and I, we're just the first Abbeys in the West. Our grandson's grandsons are ahead of us—and we've got to make it secure for them. It's Grouse Creek or it's nothing on earth."

That was his job, his purpose as destiny had finally revealed it: to hold Grouse Creek against the treachery and fatality of the earth, making his shoulders and his hands irresistible, till at last, its drouths impotent, its blizzards and plagues faced down, the desert bowed its head in surrender and the Abbeys were safe. . . . Yet his cattle died, his checker-squares of tilled soil in that waste of sand grew no wider, a faint down of crops pushed above the earth, melted in the sun, withered under wind and hail. The desert did not need to move against him. It lay quiet and its own came back. Salt grass and cactus and sage. Scrofulous tules where the creek itself turned downward into the earth. Foothills dancing together in the mirage that clad barren shoulders with cedars and set lakes of clear water where rattlesnakes baked themselves in the dust. A wind that was never in a hurry yet never rested, blistering cheeks, cracking lips, getting its uneasy thresh into the brain where it echoed day and night. Scabs of alkali that gave the wind an edge of steel, left their scale on the lips, shot the sun back into

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your eyes like a mirror. And the sun itself that burned down through the sheathing of your bones.

Jim's thoughts turned to the two men left there in the Basin for the Winter. Even now they slept on their blankets under the stars. Four logs laid on the ground, spruce boughs carried thirty miles on the saddle to fill the frame, then the blankets laid on top of them, and at the head a six-inch canvas staked out for wind-break. A bed for a man! Then the snows closed down, plugging a hundred miles of canyon so that not even the angels of God might approach. The herders would withdraw then to the sheds, chink the crevices as they might, bring the best of the horses into the rooms on each side of them, burn up their wood, and long for melting snows and the hope of seeing Jim Abbey and whatsoever aides he might conscript ride down the trail from Wheedon's peak. If a tree fell on one, or if he died, it would be known in the Spring; and all along the fences inside which the herd was gathered to eat the summer harvest of hay, the tracks of wolves and panthers that leaped at the haunches of the cows to hamstringing them. . .

A long time! Year after year, the years eating like fire at the roots of a tree. He was getting old, and Pemberton growing up. More than a man's life, more than his son's—one after another all the Abbeyes that were born for as long as need be. A long time, a long time.

His hope was Pemberton. There were those violent moments when he must crush his son's rebelliousness, but they did not trouble Jim's vision. He labored to show the boy the secret of the house. He walked much with Pemberton in the evenings. He broke into the day's labor to point out the obligation. He would

not have dreamed that Pemberton could do otherwise than share the same love and the same fierce desire. For he, Jim, was the fading present of the Abbeyes—the present that had never meant much in his desire—and Pemberton was the future.

“. . . And don't ever trust these people. Don't make a trust with them, my boy. Don't ever dream they can see things the way you do. They can't. Don't ever dream they can lick you, either, not even if they all joined together. It's you against them forever. Don't count on them for anything, anything at all. Except to be low and vile—you can count on that. . . . They're cowards—they live their lives out jealous of men. They'll hate you and be afraid of you. They'd kill you for being more man than they, if they had the guts. Let them howl and yelp. That's their nature. . . . They don't understand. Never forget you're bound by things they don't understand—things they can't see and would laugh at if they could. Don't forget a man must keep his honor if all the curs on earth bark at him. Don't make any mistake about their kind, and don't make any mistake about your kind. You will have courage and honor. And they won't. . . .

“. . . I don't count. I thought I did, but it's a new land and a long land. It's my job to put in the foundations and yours to put on the roof. It's the land does it—land, land, always land. You won't buy and sell and haggle and cheat and run with a pack of curs that snap at each other. The land's honest. You can trust it. . . . Look at Kleinfeld. Your honor will make you die before you'll betray a trust that's put on you. . . . I came West too late. Ten years earlier, and I could have done it all myself,

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but I'll live to give you the start you need. It isn't me that counts, nor your mother, and it's not you. It's what's to come after you. . . .

"Grouse Creek will do it for you. Hang on, and hang on, and hang on. Endure to the end, and then it will be won and over. We'll have won, us, the Abbeys. It will be what we were meant to do. . . . My boy, the land is everything. It's what makes our bones. We've had to make this country with our hands. We've had to build it up out of dust. That's what has wore me out. . . . But I don't count. . . ."

He could see . . . so very much. There was a house with white pillars, and a toothed cornice showing through the walnut trees and the mulberries, above a closer bank of evergreen. There was the serenity that was to be the end of all the Abbey labor and desire, when the Abbeys had shaped their will upon the earth. Peace and security, the dignity of life mastered, the beauty of a land made responsive to their desire. The Abbey women and the Abbey men when the Abbey strength had done its work. . . . All this was cloudy in his eyes.

The representative of the Omaha bank had come West and made the bone-cracking trip to Grouse Creek Basin, so that the bank might know what lay behind the grandiose schemes that James Abbey, once a prosperous client, was asking it to sanction. Jim had taken him through those miles of riven granite, those miles of wind and alkali, and now they were back. The man had been self-contained. Little had escaped him of word or gesture that might betray his thoughts. But once or twice there had been an oath, an exclamation.

Reading the map that Jim had made for the bank five years ago, "How were we to know this creek bed was dry ten months a year?" Or, once, topping one ridge, after the day's ride had topped a dozen others already, and when the newest discovered only more ridges farther on across more gulches till the haze swallowed the farthest, "Good God! isn't there a tree in all hell?"

Back at Blaine, there was secrecy—hours when the representative read his notes behind a locked door, heavy manila envelopes mailed to Omaha, telegrams sent and received. . . . Yet somehow Jim knew that he was lost. Nothing was to be made of that realization. It meant nothing. The world was numb. . . . And at last the representative, with due solemnity, was ready to speak.

"The bank has misunderstood the situation from the first, Mr. Abbey."

The voice went on, the bank trying to be business-like and unemotional. It was not that Mr. Abbey had misrepresented things. Of course not. Mr. Abbey was the soul of honor. But he, the representative, could not, here and now, imagine how the bank had gone into it in the first place. Surely, good business sense would have sent a man out to look at it with his eyes. . . .

"What can you expect of it, Mr. Abbey? Crops? Cattle? Settlers to come in and pay you unearned increment on your land? It would take an army corps working half a century to bring a crop into harvest. Your cattle die like flies,—and if they did not, how could you get them to a shipping point—skin and bones, nothing but hides? Settlers? Mr. Abbey, Grouse Creek won't be settled in a hundred years. A century?—it will never be settled. No one will ever settle there. No one in his right mind. . . .

"On paper it looked to us like a big thing. A development. Promotion—a new boom. Colonization: men rushing in on horseback to buy land. There've been plenty of booms in the West—we wanted in on it—but no booms I've heard of in the desert. . . ."

To him, it was obviously a fool's dream, a mad-man's. Desert sun had addled the brains of Jim Abbey. A mirage had led him on.

"The United States Government couldn't do what you're dreaming of doing—couldn't finance what you're asking us to finance. To bring water into that desert. To blast out a trail you could so much as drive a wagon over. To fight drouth and snow—to concentrate a hundred years of history into what's left of your lifetime."

To try what little men were afraid to try, Jim's

heart cried. What did all this amazement of the bank mean but that? To have a heart firm in resolution to do what cowards ran howling from. They were lice.

"We cannot countenance such folly for one moment. The bank will not take a share in such a wildly extravagant project. It cannot extend your credit, in any way. For what it has already advanced you—all the mortgages in the world on that badlands aren't worth the cancellation stamp. We must quit cold and swallow our loss. . . ."

Yet they would—that being the nature of the maggots—keep what they could, lest this mirage should somehow, sometime, prove to be a real thing . . . —"feel that our equity in Grouse Creek continues—the courts would probably hold that it is all ours, that your equity has long since been eaten up. . . ."

And, finally, steal what a man has, breed more worms from your corruption—"your lands in Ophir Valley—far better than anything around them. The bank has the utmost confidence in your ability as a farmer. . . . No unwillingness whatever to accept a mortgage on your valley land for the full amount of your indebtedness to us . . . all the time you need. . . ."

That was the end.

He drove the representative to Windsor City, next day, to take the waters of the boiling springs before rejoining his bank. There was a ritual of courtesy. Be gently spoken, both, let no one guess that there was anything afoot—let no one see that hate broke out in you like rains in a dry gulch. . . . Jim's legs were chilled. His blood moved sluggishly. The town made no impress on his mind. He was not aware of men or buildings, sun or sound.

There was the new four-story building of the First

National. Tom Whitaker, banker, ex-gambler. . . . And over the trails and battered waste-heaps of the hills, Grouse Creek Basin, parched in the sun, where a man, alone, might tear the earth to his will. Lost. Quite done. . . . Almighty God, damn Herman Kleinfeld.

For a terrible moment he held the team still in the street before the First National. He saw a vision of himself dismounting, going in, demanding that Tom Whitaker's puppets pour their money into Grouse Creek, as Omaha would not. A year or two more—give him a year or two, give him time to breathe for one irresistible charge against the desert. Tom Whitaker, gambler, great man of Windsor City and Jim Abbey begging him for money. *Mr. Whitaker, I've come to borrow money for my Grouse Creek lands. I've come to ask you for money. I've come to ask you to save my lands and my soul and my life. I've come to ask you to let me work out the future of the Abbeys for all time.* . . . Jim's hands on the wagon-seat gripped wood and iron as though they would mould themselves there. That insanity lifted. He drove on past the First National, but the moment had taught him panic.

Yes, as the days passed, panic.

"Give me long enough to live——" he had Sue's shoulders in his hands. "I can do it by myself. By myself! Of all the fools I've been—the worst is the fool that tried to do anything in any way, but alone."

"No, Jim," she touched her faded lips to his forehead. She was beyond the power of all this to touch her save as it blew desolation into Jim's heart. "No, it just isn't to be done, Jim. It never was to be done. It's just—too big." She saw him, always these days,

just that, a puny man in the great wastes of sage. It was her first sight of him there, years ago, with the sage above his waist and his arms rising and falling. Alone in the desert.

"I'll clear land till I die."

"But here, Jim, this place—all we've got. Will you lose that?"

No Abbey had ever been afraid. Yet terror reached out across him—a cloud over the valley that hid the sun from his fields.

"Oh, God! There's nothing to be done, Sue, nothing but hang on, fight it through. Everything on earth can be endured."

"Yes, Jim. I reckon I've seen clearer than you always. All our lives you've been saying how things can be endured. . . . How long have we got to live, Jim, you and me? You've got to forget Grouse Creek, if it breaks you up in a thousand pieces. You've got to forget all these years. This place—oh, Jim, we can't let it get away from us. We got to have it to be old—and for Pemberton."

For Pemberton! The vast cloud lightened just imperceptibly. There he was: Pemberton, to go on past Jim, past defeat. . . .

Almost at once panic was indeed upon him. . . .

"Did you see Lottie?" Sue asked him when he came back from Windsor City, where he had driven a load of potatoes from his pits.

"No. Restaurant's locked up. Lottie's sick and so's old Schmidt. Talk's going round that it's smallpox."

Susan dropped her knitting and stilled the rocker she was sitting in. Against all the other terrors of

the frontier there might be defence, but smallpox! She had unconsciously laid a hand on her breast. Her needles, tangled in yarn, fell to the floor.

The plague advanced over Windsor City. The valley folk cowered behind the fifteen miles that might preserve them. They heard how the doors were shut in the streets, how no one went about anywhere, how names familiar for many years were written on the death-list. How long before the valley would smell death?

It touched close home. Father Tierney, they learned, had died after terrible vigils nursing the sick. Father Tierney who had walked beside him in the evenings, who had prayed above the grave of little James—the one friend the West had held for Jim Abbey.

The plague strode on into Ophir Valley. The German family at the far end where the hills drew together were all down with it. Jed Wills was sick. . . . Anything else would have seen the valley folk abandoning their own enterprises, running any risk, to help the unfortunate. But smallpox smothered humanity. No one approached a house where the plague had entered. Men whipped their horses to a gallop passing it, and held their breath till the lungs ached lest they breathe contagion.

Susan kept Ruth inside the house, and broke her heart with terror for Pemberton whom no one could keep in. Jim forbade the Bingham to approach any of his family. All that the folk-lore prescribed they did; closed the windows against the night miasmas, hung bags of asafetida from their necks, sprinkled sulphur in their shoes. . . . Susan kept the eyes of a hawk on her children. But the night that Amos Bing-

ham stopped fifty yards from the door to shout that all the Germans at the valley-end were dead, she roused Jim from sleep.

"Listen to Pemberton!" she cried.

They could hear him in the next room breathing heavily, a faint moan accompanying each inhalation. Sue ran to him, calling on God. . . . No doctor could be got from Windsor City. Of the three who lived there, one had died of the disease he had tried to allay and the others bore on their shoulders the whole weight of the plague.

No fever could overcome the strength of Pember-ton. As he triumphed over the disease, Jim, exhausting his days and nights with nursing, had moments of believing that prayer had saved the Abbays. But, one day, for all his oaths, Jim too could not rise. . . . During his rational interludes he swore at Susan, ordering her to take Ruth and move into the hills, to leave him where he was and flee from death. Death, indeed, rode its joust at Jim Abbey, but it was not his hour. He drew together all the tempered sinews of his will and faced it back. He was tottering on his feet, but erect, when in one morning the rash mottled the faces of Ruth and Susan.

Chaos. He drove himself beyond the furthest limit of strength, bathing them, giving them water, easing them in bed, doing all that might be done, obeying Sue's directions while she could still speak. Pember-ton, recovered, labored at his side. . . . Oh, God damn the people of the valley! who dared not bring help to the dying. . . . Ruth sank into a coma from which he could not rouse her. But for a day and a night delirium sent Sue's quiet voice through the house

in whispers that broke down stone by stone the edifice of Jim's life.

She was driving westward along the Overland Trail. For peace, for freedom, to forget the war and its heart's-drouth. She screamed with the pangs of child-birth in that desolation. Sun burned into her soul. And now she was in this country of the new beginning. The peaks were toppling on her. All night she was afraid, and the desert she had found was far worse than the war she had fled from.

Once she raised her head from the pillow. Jim, bending over her, his hand trying to be gentle as he forced her back, could not tell whether her eyes had opened in worse delirium or whether their depths were sane. Her voice was as clear as a girl's.

"A land of death, Jim—a land of death!" The stupor that had overcome her daughter claimed her at once.

. . . Ruth died one midnight, her drowsy numbness never having ended. Sue knew nothing of her going and, before dawn, had followed after her.

It was early June. Pemberton was digging two graves on the hillside under the walnut tree that already shaded one. Jim, two gunny sacks slung over his saddle, rode up the gulch past Herman's flume toward the gray heights of Ophir Needle. Surely, though no doctor could be got from Windsor City, surely some one would come to read a decent service over those graves. And, till he came, there must be ice for the bodies. He would find it somewhere in hollows that had been packed deep with snow.

The mountainsides were everywhere pageant with

new green. It would be some weeks before that life would fade and the desert show through. These flowers would die, these grasses parch till they rattled in the wind and nowhere was any water nor anything at all but death.

His horse stopped on a ridge that overlooked many miles of peaks and valleys. Below him, his own valley was hidden from sight. Everywhere ridges that led upward and beyond, in ranked procession far away. His eyes stopped at a distant blue blur. It was the mouth of a canyon that led to the trail one took toward Grouse Creek.

Grouse Creek. The farthest reach of the Abbey lust. A land of death. The stunned grief of his heart moderated toward resignation. He was driving westward along the trail. The oxen bubbled their thirst. Sue was faint and drowsy, holding the child to her slackened breast. The trail westward into freedom, into the future.

He thought of Pemberton at work on the graves. He thought of all the years during which Susan had grown old watching him fling his hope with a wild hand into the desert. This was trail's end. He had achieved the freedom he had set out for. Here ended the long trail westward, alkali and sun and wind, desire and the future. Here the house of Abbey came into fulfillment. Yes, in this land of death, this June morning, he and his were free. Forever.

INTERLUDE

QUARTZ

Years afterward, John Gale was to decide that Pemberton Abbey had had no youth.

He had heard Vincent Malooth and Aaron Dunlap laughing at Jim Abbey for a fool. Thereafter, once or twice more, he heard the same contempt, but soon he was of a size to prevent its expression. He had a methodical way of beating people with his fists that discouraged ridicule, but from the time when he was twelve he understood that his father's folly was a byword. That had its part in his growing up. The farm had another part. Jim had driven him to the soil but had never been able to use up his energy. The boy climbed to within an inch of Jim's height, and his shoulders were wider than Jim's had ever been, and all his life no man ever saw him tired.

(Pemberton, John Gale was to decide, was, finally, only energy.)

A few months after Susan's death Jim's horse threw him and crushed his hip. He could still walk with a cane, but he never again bestrode a horse, put his shoulder behind a wheel, or saw his vanished acres at Grouse Creek. He was frustrated everywhere but in his violent soul, and it was more than ever necessary to fit Pemberton to be his vicar. The smallpox had taken Amos Bingham but had left his family, and Jim moved them to his house and set Sarepta and her daughters to work keeping it, while he ordered Sam and young Amos about his fields. From his chair on

the west porch, in the shade of his walnuts and mulberries, he directed the battle he could no longer fight in person. But, it became evident, he could not direct Pemberton.

Jim never quite understood that there were now two Abbey wills. He had trained his son well in violence, in doggedness, and in resistance. Pemberton had no pleasure in a farm or a vision; he would not submit to the infamy of serving either. For a while the sheer impetus of Jim's will rode him down, but he rebelled increasingly, and the old man ate out his heart in despair. Jim had transferred to his son the obligations of the Abbey vision: when his son proved recreant to them, the whole structure came tumbling down in ruin. There were clashes between them that seemed to fuse their double anger in a single hate. For more than a year after Susan's death, their periodic contest continued, but Pemberton was of the morning, and it could have but one end. He could, at any time, have stopped the beatings that Jim inflicted on him, from his stern will to bring the boy to God's intent, and one day he did so. He was just past seventeen.

Jim had beaten him with a buggy whip till his own dismay halted him, his crippled leg braced against the barn. Pemberton had stood quiet under the whip. Their faces were death-masks, but futility and grief had weakened Jim. When he stopped, Pemberton tore the whip from his hands, ripped it in two and threw it at his feet.

"Use it on the Bingham's," Pemberton said, "you'll never touch me again."

Edith Bingham, the only one of her tribe with spirit, came running from the house with rags and liniment for Pemberton's back. "You old devil!" she was

screaming, but Pemberton swung her round and ordered her away from them. He turned to his father, who was leaning against the barn and trembling with impotence.

"I'm clearing out. You can stay here and rot. Beat hell out of Sam and Amos, if you want—they're only cattle. But don't expect to see me around here."

Jim's voice showed the extent of his collapse. "My boy, am I driving you off the farm?"

"Farm—hell! It's licked you but it won't get a chance to lick me. You spent your life harnessed to a plow—well, spend the rest of it blacksnaking the Bingham. I'm going to make money."

Make money! Jim heard his son speaking the language of the swine. Here, then, was the house of Abbey—ended.

"Fools think they can lick this country farming it. They've called you a fool the length of the State. Well, they'll never say I was the fool Jim Abbey was."

With no further words, without a hat or a blanket, his shirt drying in the welts on his back, Pemberton turned his back on Jim and strode through the gate and on down the road toward Windsor.

Jim was left to sit under the walnut and watch the sun decline over Ophir Valley and let his heart corrode with knowledge of his son.

No one ever knew what instinct took Pemberton to the mines. John Gale, whose years seemed to have little purpose but to brood on Pemberton Abbey, knew that drifts and pitches were in his soul, and his fibre was of gneiss or basalt—that he was meant for the fundamental rock as the bee's pollinated legs for the

flower. Pemberton Abbey, he decided, followed the same direction that turned a flower toward the sun or the needle toward the pole. He made for the mines, obeying the voiceless word that sent the wild-fowl northward when the ice broke up. It was a thrusting upward of the leaf, a nuptial flight.

To the good folk of Windsor, Pemberton Abbey was to be a symbol of ruthlessness and strength. It was those first years that gave him both. And if anyone taught him, then one master was Mordecai Krug.

Five years before Pemberton's rebellion, the Sunrise Queen vein had been uncovered in the canyons fifty miles south of Ralston, a hundred miles south of Windsor. Already the Sunrise Queen was the greatest silver producer even known, and a half dozen lesser mines had tapped that incredible vein. Mordecai Krug, after great stress, had acquired the great mine and was marching on its lesser kin. And from Ophir Valley, Pemberton went straight to the Sunrise Queen.

He went to work mucking ore. A thousand feet underground, twelve hours a day he raked blasted ore into heaps and shoveled it into mule-cars. Jim had at least given him shoulders for the work. Before long, he was foreman over all the muckers in one gallery, and was driving them as he had bid Jim drive the Bingham. This was the first time he had been in authority over men. They were not peaceable men. They were Welsh and Irish miners who had been culled from the camps of all the West, and already Krug was beginning to debauch the old methods by importing Europeans. One mastered such folk, or he did not last long. Pemberton, who was a boy that had had no youth, mastered them in the way that came natural to him.

So he spent his days. By night he prowled about the mine and the canyons, learning what he could of silver and its ways. He learned the wanderings of the veins, and the grain of all the rock in the township. His mind took the imprint of the country till, above ground or below it, by night or day, the touch of his finger was enough to orient him anywhere about.

After a while, he had learned enough from the Sunrise Queen and a great hunger for knowledge had come upon him. He rode a freight-car to Denver, and broke the jaw of a brakeman whose indiscretion led him to call Pemberton Abbey a bum. In Denver he found a job in an assay office, and there, by day, doing his work with blowpipes and reagents, he learned what assayers could teach him. He learned, to his surprise, that books could teach him more. It was a discovery that disturbed him, for study required more discipline than he cared to obey. But it was a step in some plan that he had never defined—or perhaps only his will's awareness of something further to be done. He set to work to master every page in Denver that dealt with the ore-bearing rocks and their discovery and reduction. Sleep never, in his life, seemed an essential—it was something he yielded to only when there was no pressure elsewhere. He wrestled with books less expertly than with men; he had none of the knowledge that all books took for granted; but there they were, in his path, and they must be mastered. "I broke my heart," he once told Gale, "because I found a book on the sulphides of gold in German. I couldn't read it, but how did I know I might not have to know about gold sulphides? I found a bum in the back room of a saloon and bought him a gallon of whisky to read it to me." And again: "There was a broken down

old tramp that swept out at our assay place. Been in Australia and a man once. Described to me a process he'd worked out to use cyanide on gold ores. I'd never heard of cyanide. I had no use for him, and anyway he died of DT's within a year. Ten years later they worked out the cyanide process abroad, and it was the same as our tramp's. Anyway, for enough to get stewed on once a week, he'd come to my room and teach me how to handle mercury. Yes, and I put in a crusher for Krug, later, that I built to scale out of scraps on my bed off Larimer Street."

He was a year in Denver, and then he gave up the assay office, which could teach him no more, and began to wander all about the mineral West. Wherever there was a stamp mill or a smelter, flotation tanks, mercury sluices, acid baths, or anything else that dealt with metals, there after a while came the hobo Pemberton. He would sign on with any crew that worked with rock. He stored his mind with the working of every process he could find, and by main force he unravelled the theory behind it from books. Just a bum. But a bum with fire eating at his heart. His job was to learn these rocks, tear out their secrets, find the way to make them obey his will.

These mining camps hung by an eyelash from cliffs two miles in the air, or were buried in narrow gulches that never saw the sun. They were filled with strong, volcanic men—men who led their lives battering the ribs of mountain peaks. On shift, they opposed men's flesh against the rock. Then whistles blew, and they rode their buckets into fresh air and looked about for amusement. The liquors they swilled differed little from those that corroded ore and sucked out the metal it concealed. Clapboard shacks where they played

games with lampblack cards were arenas wherein to fling their lust of life and to defy chance, a spur that quickened life in them. They stormed into other shacks where by triumphing over women they could be still more keenly aware that they were alive and men. Hard-rock men, gamblers, liquor, harlots—it was Pemberton's way to take what he could use of them.

There was, too, a long trip eastward to Cincinnati and Philadelphia, where he learned more elaborate metallurgy. Then, at twenty-one, Pemberton was back in the West, making solitary prospecting trips into the deserts. Suddenly, he was at work again in Mordecai Krug's mines. At twenty-one he was ageless. The Abbey cleft between his brows had deepened, and, like to like, his muscles were of rock; and no man knew how the Abbey restlessness and desire ate at him as it had at his father.

At the Sunrise Queen he climbed from one foremanship after another up the Krug hierarchy. They learned now about Pemberton Abbey. He could overcome rock and he could cow men. How he spent his nights no one knew, but they said at the mine that Abbey was like God and shaft-water—he was everywhere.

No, Pemberton never had any youth.

But meanwhile he had one of youth's fruits. He made brief visits to Blaine, where his father's impotent wrath no longer even goaded him to reply, but where he could be with Edith Bingham, growing to womanhood. Wide-browed, deep-breasted, arrogant, she was a strange flower to bloom among the Bingham

fennel. She could drive a four-horse plow as effortlessly as she danced all night at the Blaine dances. All her brothers and sisters cringed before Pemberton, as it became Bingham to behave toward Abbeys; only she defied him, and her eyes danced with laughter. There was turbulence enough in his blood without her, but her disdain called him to master her.

Mastering Edith Bingham was not a job for the hands that mastered the granite of the hills. She was not to be taken—and what he knew of women he had learned among the drabs of the mining camp. Where in the Bingham ancestry had there ever been defiance?

She threw back her head and laughed when she saw his horse trotting down the long hill to the farm. It was the memory of her that had drawn him back once more from the mines. Pemberton Abbey, who acknowledged no domination, riding to her side—learning that there were other passions than the one that held him to the rocks. . . . Well, there would be dancing in some one's barn. They would walk and ride together. Pemberton would be tempestuous and her pulse would race in answer to him—but she must teach him that there was one woman who was not to be had for the asking.

He swept her into his arms, and, for all her pride, she was weak against his kiss. Youth betrayed her: her arms locked behind his head and she answered the kiss. But she flung away from him and recovered herself.

"Oh, no, Pemberton. You've had too many women that way. I'm done with you."

She was faster than he, nor for hours could he have a word with her. That was her necessity—to keep him thwarted, to send him back to the mines with his

fire for her unslaked. . . . Till one day, riding over the hills, he pulled his horse to hers, swung her away from the saddle, held her to him. Her horse bolted over the hills, his rocked and committed the folly of bucking against his wrist. Secure in his arms, she watched his cheeks flatten with intensity, subduing something that opposed his will. He was not angry with the beast, but it had to be mastered. The horse gentled, Pemberton let the reins loop over the saddle horn.

"You'll marry me this afternoon."

"I guess I will," she said.

When he brought her back to Blaine, Jim Abbey recognized the final profanation of his house.

"Bring that woman here in your mother's place?" he stormed, when he was alone with his son, and the Bingham women, who were ennobled by the marriage, had taken the bride to themselves. "I'd have held you off with a gun if I had known. You were always a sneak, Pemberton—no hint of honor ever reached your mind, you never knew what honor was. All that was left to you was the Abbey blood, and now you've mingled my blood with this trash. You were meant for a litter of swine—you were never born my son."

The old man was crippled in his chair. To hold the world back from him he had only a cane. And Pemberton, prowling about the room that Susan Abbey had made sacred for Jim, was defending his wife and had no time for a father.

"You'll take her in and you'll keep her. You'll treat her like my wife. You rant on about Abbeys—she's Edith Abbey now. And what's that? My God, the worst she'll have to face is being called your daughter.

Abbeys! Is there anybody in the State that hasn't had his laugh at you?"

"Nobody ever laughed at me to my face. Nobody but a son that ignored the obligation of his family——"

"Turned his back on the damndest fool scheme a man ever lost money on. The West has moved past you—and you were going to master it. Only a fool ever looked for money in the land. Didn't you ever see this is a desert?—and you made yourself a plow-ox trying to make it pay. And all the time there it was in the rocks—all the money in the world."

"Money! I've heard talk about it—Kleinfelds and Whitakers and Bingham. I know swine's talk when I hear it. And now you're married to a Bingham."

"She's not a Bingham like the ones you've bullied into slaving for you. She's not an Amos or Sam or Madeline. You'll see quick enough—you won't scare her."

"Take a Bingham into the house of your mother and put her in your mother's place? In the house where your mother and your sister——"

"Right here in this house. And you'll treat her white."

And Jim did. Though it had taken his son to point it out, she was an Abbey now. He was soon more than merely ceremonious to her. He began by driving her sisters to serve her, who envied her and were jealous, since a Bingham must have someone to call fortunate. He ended by wholly loving and accepting her. So much life and mirth and kindness were a hearth-fire to his heart—when his son was out of sight and therefore need not be despised.

That was Pemberton Abbey's marriage. John Gale, years later, spent many hours brooding about it. When Gale came to know him, the energies that were Pemberton had been set in one direction forever. The ore was smelted, the metal forged. Surely the tenderness that Edith Abbey had struck from him, and all her loveliness and mirth, might have shaped him differently, if she had had more than the two years vouchsafed her. Pemberton Abbey would have been otherwise . . . if the word happiness could have symbolized for him something more than two years of marriage, something more than two years of brief occasional reprieves from hard-rock and the men who tore it out.

BOOK II

LOW-GRADE COPPER

It was 1890 when John Gale came to Windsor and built his house on a hill southeastward from the city. He was thirty-four, ten years older than the man who was to be his only friend. He came from Beacon Hill, where, a young Mugwump who found little to delight him, he had long sat in the seats of the scornful. Beacon Hill had turned westward for its investments and felt it not amiss to have some one on the ground to keep an eye on its railroads, its mines, and its ranches. Uncles, cousins, and brothers believed that by sending John Gale they might well reclaim him to his breed and find for him an occupation that would make his tongue more dutiful. And John Gale, bearing himself respectfully, gave thanks to be done with New England and hoped that the West would live up to its reputation. Books and orators held it to be a lost, splendid Atlantis, where the New England race that had brought Anglo-Saxon destinies to fruition, once more flung its grandeur abroad. His race, he had been told, was fading on the seaboard, but recruiting its energies on the frontier. He would see. He was familiar with the decay: he was part of it. Now, he would inquire into the regeneration.

He needed only a little time. The West differed not at all from the Back Bay. The energies were degraded and dissipated, no less here than there. The race, he conceded, was damned, whether seaboard or frontier occupied it, and he had little reason to believe

that the damnation was not inherent in it from the beginning.

But—but mountain air gave him a vigor he had never had. It lifted his wife from invalidism to some years of health. It gave him a daughter before his third year was out. And the land was of a great beauty—so great that it oppressed and overwhelmed and frightened him, who had come of a race that was parsimonious of loveliness, at the same time that it renewed life in him. The tides of day and shadow breaking on the peaks, the far deep-veiled valleys, the sun and distances and barbaric chaos of color broke up the deeps within him. He loved this country as it is given to some men to love a woman—or as John Gale came to despise the folk who dwelt in it. He built his house on a hill, where the air might tingle in his lungs, where his wife might take strength from the sun, and where he might spend his life looking out over such a land as New England could not conceive nor understand. He tranquilly exiled himself from the Back Bay, caring not at all whether it remembered or forgot him, whether his mind lost the memory of its contour, whether indeed it sank under the swamps it had been reclaimed from. The mountains, he understood, were his country; he would live there, and there, when he died, they would have his ashes.

The shares and mortgages he had come to watch over had none of his interest and but little of his time. He could hire clerks, he found, to take better care of them than he could give. His Mugwump mind—he had been born a dissenter, a heretic, a minority—began to play congenially with the bases of his new country. What had it sprung from? What manner of folk were they who peopled it? What was its

meaning, its destiny? He began an essay for his private amusement—and found that fate had made him a historian. The essay, once, had thirty pages. Ink and the years elaborated it. It ended as nine volumes.

And, finally, the West brought him his friend. Life had been but feeble until he found Pemberton Abbey.

Gale had been in Windsor just long enough to find a house but not long enough to obtain servants in such a democracy when the West flamed with Pemberton Abbey's attack on Mordecai Krug. At that moment, it seemed to John Gale a symbol of all that he had expected the West to be: violence, piracy, and a new energy that broke its way through the old forms and the old moralities and the old judgments to establish itself according to its own law and the future. And if, later, he came to see that it was a symbol of all that the West was not, why, it remained true of Pemberton Abbey.

This was the first thinking he did about Pemberton Abbey, and the first picture his mind formed of him. A boy barricading himself and his army of toughs in a log shack, holding out there while hundreds of men shot at them, and in the end stealing a silver mine by force. . . . That was Pemberton, a piracy in the grand manner. The frontier was only energy, and energy found its highest phase in him. He was a glance toward tomorrow, something new under the sun, a force that broke through old ways of thought and the moralities that hooped them in, as fire bursts through a cane-break—he was a man who did his will. Gale thought of him, that first year, less as a man than as some prime force of nature—as he thought of a river flooding over its levees, or a snowslide roaring

down the flank of a peak, or a tide rising slowly along the length of a shingle beach too long for the eye to hold. There were times, when he came to know Pemberton, when he still thought of him in such terms and the rugged figure of his friend faded before a vision of nature alone in the morning twilight and no man anywhere about.

It was inevitable that they should be friends. Gale was a heretic New Englander, whose energy was wholly of the mind, and who stood aloof from any project, exploring everything and questioning everything. Abbey was of the West and his energy was wholly of the will; nothing existed that could stay him, and, contemptuous of all other things, he burned with a purpose he may never have fully understood. A conjunction of the stars marked them out for each other. John Gale built his great house on the hill. In due time Pemberton, now a father and a widower, built a cottage beside his friend's house and brought his son there. And soon John Gale, who was a father, became a widower, and there was only his friendship with Pemberton to keep him acquiescent with the world.

John Gale lived after Pemberton was dead. He lived to see the Abbey restlessness work out in him its changing destiny, and in his son the same unease go the way it must go. This fretful yeast!—this desire of something uncomprehended. The sun had been on it, in bogs, before life coalesced in the mud. It became the center of Gale's life, so that, studying it, he came to read the world in the house of Abbey.

Meanwhile, in a waste of mirage, one thing was real. He and Pemberton were friends. Neither ever had another friend, nor asked for one.

Some years had gone into preparation for that fusillade at the Sunrise Queen which first brought Pemberton to the notice of Gale and the West. Into those years Pemberton poured his strength as prodigally as need be.

Henry Clay Bryce first understood those years. Bryce had come West as chief justice of the Territorial Supreme Court, and now that Statehood was a fact was staying on to practice in the courts he had established. He was also the only man in Windsor, first and last, who was never afraid of Pemberton Abbey.

Into his office, one day some years before the fusillade, burst a violent young man of whose fists Bryce had heard tales. "You're an educated man," Pemberton said, moving as always on a bee-line for his objective. "Well, I want you to teach me trigonometry."

Bryce had lived a long time in the West, but this was the first time anyone had ever asked him for education. "Well," he rumbled, "I've been damn near everything in Windsor but a school-teacher and a midwife. I'll live long enough to be both. Buy yourself some books—if there's any in the West."

"And listen here," Pemberton said, "I want trigonometry—I don't want a college education."

Bryce spat through the window—his office was the dusty loft above the Dutchman's Lunch. "Boy, it don't pay to interfere with a midwife. You'll learn trigonometry till you can pick your teeth with a cosine. But don't begin by giving me orders how to teach it. You go buy some books."

This was the beginning of another job for Pemberton. What time he found for sleep no one ever discovered, and this left him less. At the Sunrise Queen

he had risen till before long he would be superintendent over all the rock that came from the shaft. Mordecai Krug was a great man in the West, and books would yet be written about him, chiefly because he was a hard man among men. His career had been a melodrama of successive piracies, and he had never found human life quite so valuable or so spirited as ore-bearing rock. In Pemberton he had found a man fitted, above the rest, to do his work in his way. Pemberton drove them all alike—men and mules, drillers, muckers, car-bosses, mule-skinners, blasters, surveyors, hard-rock men, pan-men, and mill-boys—to the extreme limit of their strength, which was what Krug asked of him. And he had no idea of sparing himself.

Meanwhile Pemberton prowled by day and night till every inch of the mines was photographed on his brain. He knew the drift and pitch of the range as intimately as his own thoughts. He knew every step in the processes of reduction and extraction. And now to all this he would add mathematics. The books he studied under Bryce were no easier than those in Denver and elsewhere. Rock he could understand but the structure of books was more resistant. He drove his mind against them as he would drive a drill into the living gneiss; he had less satisfaction in the result. Every time he traveled from the mine to Blaine, he paused in Windsor to thresh out the text books with Judge Bryce. Bryce kept his face non-committal, and privately sat up nights devising still more fiendishly intricate problems for the boy to solve. No doubt it was then that Pemberton learned what was between Bryce and Mordecai Krug.

He had been married more than two years when all this labor began to have a meaning for Bryce. It was

1890, the year John Gale came to Windsor. . . . He prowled about Bryce's office and could not be still. Bryce thought, if he stood still for a moment energy would break out on him in boils. The agony was, Bryce could see, that Pemberton had reached a place where he could no longer go on alone—and he had no capacity to trust another. The necessity of sharing his purpose nearly destroyed him.

Years later, John Gale could have explained to Bryce that the Abbeyes must walk alone—each of them.

Bryce was, first and last, the only man in Windsor who never feared Pemberton Abbey. A ponderous man, with drowsy eyes that did not betray his intelligence. He had once ridden with Sheridan, but now he had three chins and his legs were gross. These days, he liked best a chair in the mountain sun, a few old soldiers to call him Colonel, and some tangle of Spanish and squatters' law to unravel for the admiration of the court. And he hated Mordecai Krug, whom he had known in the war, as a colonel may hate one kind of brigadier. . . .

Now, he smoked tranquilly and said nothing while he watched Pemberton pace and sweat and try to hire him as an attorney without telling him what he was to do.

"A grown-up man, Pemberton," he said at last, "comes to learn that there are times when he's got to trust men. Every badger builds two holes to his den."

"How do I know you'll not sell me out?" Pemberton reared his height above the Judge.

"You don't. You'll never know. So you'll die in your dreams every night." Judge Bryce played with something shiny in his lap, with a two-barrelled deringer he had found in his pocket. "I don't talk of

honor to you, Pemberton, for it's a word you cannot understand. But I can talk of bullets and reach you where you live. . . . Somebody will be shooting you, one day, Pemberton, and it may be me."

"Honor! You talk like my old man."

"There's no room for it in your scheme, is there, Pemberton? But the world's not all honorless men any more than it's all fools. And I'm neither, though you seem to think I'm a fool. Why would you be working for Krug, year after year, when you're your own man? Why would you haunt his mine like a ghost? Why would you spend two years learning mathematics? Why would you be an engineer—a surveyor? Fools wouldn't ask those questions, and surely you're safe in thinking no fool could ever answer them. Well, I'm no fool. You've found a flaw in the title or the surveys of the Sunrise Queen and you've got to have me to prove it for you in the Courts."

He was swung up between earth and heaven, this ungainly gross of flesh, while the derringer clattered along the floor, and held there with Pemberton's fingers tightening on his neck. He was half suffocated when Pemberton set him down.

"I'll kill you like a snake, if a word gets out. If you talk about it in your sleep, I'll strangle you."

Bryce retrieved his derringer and his dignity. "You must learn, too, not to make threats, Pemberton. Kill a man if you like, but don't let him go and then tell him you will. You'll never kill me, Pemberton. . . . But I'm your attorney now and I've told you your secret. Let me see your figures."

Pemberton thrust a hand inside his shirt, paused,

turned on him again. "I know you hate Krug. I know you'd crawl through hell to do him damage."

"That's something you can understand. Trust to that, Pemberton, trust to my hate, not my honor. Yes, I've no love for Krug—as you knew when you started. The figures, I say."

Pemberton tossed on the table before him a packet of thin sheets covered with diagrams and computations. Bryce slipped off the rubber band that held them together, picked up the first page, and reached for pencil and paper. . . . Two hours later, when he had intricately verified the mathematics of his pupil, he looked up from the litter of papers, and Pemberton had not moved away. There was a ribald peace in Bryce's eyes.

"Have you proved it?" he asked.

"Every week for a year. I know every course by heart. I brought a surveyor all the way from St. Louis—so's he'd be safe—and sneaked him in. He was a fool. I took him out with lanterns by night, but he lost his head. I told him to flop and lie quiet if he heard a guard. The damn fool ran—and got drilled through the head. Damn fools do. I heaved his transit over a cliff. . . . Yeh—it's sure all right."

"Absolutely?"

"Me—make a mistake—fifty times over?"

Bryce tapped the desk with a pencil, staring off into infinite satisfaction. He softly whistled "Marching Through Georgia" between his teeth. He owed Mordecai Krug much that it would be a delight to pay.

"General Krug, they call him, Pemberton. Even in those days he hired his swearers and killers. He relieved me of my command to cover his own failure

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. . . . I don't know how hard we can hit the richest silver-producer in the known world. We'll see."

Since Krug had taken over the Sunrise Queen, in his own kind of piracy, his grip on it had been strengthened with every kind of safeguard. His men had located on and patented every inch of the wild gulch that held the mine. He owned every access, every approach. He owned the railroad that carried away the ore. He owned as much as he needed of the Legislature. He owned a personal army. And he was feared across half a million square miles.

But there was beauty in Pemberton's piracy. For years he had nosed about the gulch, on the surface and thousands of feet below, till he could, blindfolded, touch a finger to the rock and take a map-bearing. And he had meditated. The original patents of the Sunrise Queen, the claims that covered the original discovery, were three oblong strips of land that formed an uneven triangle. On the map, and in the records, they properly overlapped and intersected, and all that Krug had since acquired assumed that they were exact. But the slopes had deceived the surveyors, and no one had dreamed of questioning the original find. In the very heart of them, naked to the world, was a small triangle, no side of it more than a hundred and fifty feet, which the lines of the first survey had never covered. It was open to heaven, unpatented and unowned.

That triangle was the heart of the Sunrise Queen. The main shaft dropped straight down from it. All horizontal levels opened beneath it. The largest hoist-house and half an acre of machinery sat square

on top of it. And this triangle, which the maps showed to be Krug's, but which was no one's, Pemberton would take for his own. Then he would talk to Krug.

It was, merely, a frontal charge on the greatest bonanza of the West—and on the almost legendary Krug, who did not suffer affronts gladly. Pemberton and Bryce were each indispensable to the project. Pemberton must get and hold possession long enough for the courts to act—though Krug would turn loose on him the rifles of an army and as much dynamite as need be to blast him out. And Bryce must fight the protracted battle through all the courts of Christendom, against whatever obstructions fear, corruption, and conspiracy might devise.

Pemberton, it turned out, won Gale's heart and the West's admiration; Bryce won the respect of his guild the world over, and, when the time came, the name for sorcery and defiance that took him to the Senate. John Gale did not, at the moment, dream that he would some day follow Bryce's path through the law-reports so that he might fasten him in the amber of biography and derision. The original injunction that stopped work on the Sunrise Queen, the prolonged battle that defended it, the suit to quiet title, its progress through State courts and courts of appeal on up to the highest of all courts, the suit to recover damages for Pemberton, the owner of the central shaft, and royalties on all the ore that had been taken from beneath his land—these and all their divisions and variations John Gale was later to explore to the last comma. They were a poem of the law, a passionate lyric of legality.

He could picture to himself the awe of Windsor, the delight of Bryce, the triumph of Pemberton. To

attack Krug, the West had said, was to sign your death-warrant. If you so much as whispered his name, by night, going alone into a desert place at midnight and shoving your head down a badger's hole, by dawn he would have first and second murderers on their way to pay you off. For months both Bryce and Abbey walked warily in the protection of body-guards, and slept with armed men at their doors. Till his death, Bryce's son carried a bullet in his shoulder that had been fired at long range at his father. . . . But at last, in advance of the Supreme Court's anticipated decision, the mighty Krug surrendered and paid the pirate's ransom that was demanded. For Pemberton's abandonment of his claim, quit claim deeds and all evidence of possession, he paid exactly a million dollars. And for further blood-money, for royalties on the ore Krug had taken from his own mine, he paid something more—how much, Gale never discovered or inquired. It was enough that Bryce and Pemberton had won.

But for John Gale, all the significance and the splendor was in those first two days, those thirty-six hours when Pemberton Abbey took possession of his triangle and held it against Mordecai Krug. . . . By night he filtered through the guards, some of whom he had purchased, his gang of lawless resolute to the number of fifty—armed, provisioned, and rationed with as much whisky as they wanted. He quartered them in a stone shed that had once housed dynamite, and, taking prisoners, in the hoist-house above the main shaft. Then, crawling on his stomach, he set up at the corners of his triangle the stakes and notices of location that the law required. This was as far as the law went in the plans of Pemberton Abbey. When day came, barricaded

behind stone and sandbags, he possessed the vital workings of the Sunrise Queen—and held them off against the gathering shifts of miners. The employees of Mordecai Krug were forming battalions before they fully understood the scheme. Wires summoned Krug from Ralston in a special train, and carried out his frenzied orders to all the sheriffs and marshals he owned—till Vincent Malooth, Pemberton's man, cut the wires, crossed another hillside, cut them again, and kept them cut against a squad of linemen and their guards.

Across the open spaces of the mountain side, all day and all night, sang the bullets of Krug's toughs and Pemberton's. There were charges that died before they had so much as left the shelter of the farther works. There were crumpled bodies in the fairways—and in the fort whence Pemberton directed his defence. By night he burned the hoist-house and its maze of sheds to keep a light on the field of battle—and the morning found him still in possession—holding his claim for all the courts in the world to recognize.

Out of range of battle, Mordecai Krug danced and frothed. Jobs were lost that day, while ricocheting bullets whined along the mountainside, that had been won meritoriously with previous gunfire. More than one of his bodyguard he beat with his fists and cane; the rest he merely cut to ribbons with sharp oaths. At last quite insane with rage, he made his way to the sheds whence his men were firing at Abbey, and drove them out into the open, trying to dislodge the usurper by sheer weight of men. Some of them crawled back on their stomachs.

And after a while Henry Clay Bryce came riding up the gulch with the United States marshal from Ral-

ston, and the marshal's posse. Bryce had a nice dramatic sense and so he carried a national flag at his saddle. He drew the rifles of the posse round him and then, very courteously, very oratorically, handed Krug the injunctions that bade him call off his troops, abandon his mine, cease trespassing on the property of Pemberton Abbey, and await the court's judgment on the suits pending against him.

"It's a beautiful piece of law, Mordecai," Bryce explained. "I doubt if there's a man in the country could equal it. And you'll understand at once why I've put my heart into it, General."

There was a space while Krug danced again, to the shame of the beholders. Men had learned to swear, during the Civil War. But Bryce comfortably patted his own paunch, and was quiet with the knowledge of a welcome job most exquisitely done.

"I've got you beat, General," he chanted softly. "I've got you stopped up to the farthest fence. You can buy the State entire, for it's a new State, and cheap. But you can't buy the Federal Government, and all these injunctions are from the Federal courts. Don't strain your arteries, Mordecai. Wipe the dirty slaver from your mouth. I've got the marshal and his posse from the Government, and if I need them I can have the army and the Indian scouts, and the navy itself sailing up the Ophir."

So Bryce strutted. But for John Gale, the day was Pemberton Abbey crouched among his sandbags in the dynamite shed. His eyes were red-rimmed above cheeks that were scarred black with powder-burns. Hours of explosions in the cramped space had deafened him. In the same space there were wounded men screaming, but they did not trouble him nor

divert him from holding the unwounded to his intent.

This was Pemberton Abbey, doing what he had set out to do, taking what he wanted. John Gale, coming to Windsor when all this was happening, saw in him the Frontier he had expected—a new geography, a new era, beginning in the smoke of rifles. The Frontier did not long survive Gale's reagents, but Pemberton Abbey doing his will endured.

But those two days at the mine were working other metallurgy on Pemberton's life. The ores were in the retort, the fires were cracking them, the yield would be had for all time. If you would understand Pemberton, Gale came to know, you must stare those fires in the face.

He lumbered into Ralston and on to Windsor, he and Bryce together, in freight cars that were appropriate to their victory. His horses were at Hi-Yi's livery stable. It was midnight when he reached them and he would ride all night to tell Edith of his victory. Dawn was breaking when he reached the valley, and Edith was dead.

Labor had come upon her two weeks before her time. Her mother, who had borne many children and had watched over the bearing of many more, saw no reason why she could not preside over the coming of this one. Jim indeed thundered at her for hours, cursing her whole race, and at last she was willing that Sam should ride for a doctor. It was fifteen miles on horseback to Windsor, and though the doctor outrode Sam on the return, he was hours too late. The midwifery of Sarepta Bingham had quite done for her daughter. There was a new Abbey in the world,

but Edith was already sinking into coma. She was bleeding to death.

Within a few hours, Pemberton came with his triumph. He stood above her bed—looked at Edith Bingham who had been his wife. . . . That was the moment Gale's thought centered on. Whatever Pemberton Abbey might have been dissolved away, that moment. What he was to be hardened into steel, that moment.

Later he had words for her family. "You killed her——" to Sarepta—"Just a murderous fool. Eight fools you brought into the world—you couldn't kill one of them. No, you had to murder the one woman that ever sucked your breast." And, to the weeping medley of her sisters, "You're even with her now. You'd show her you'd pay her off. You hated every breath she drew."

"Take the kid," he said to them later. "Don't talk to me about it. Don't show it to me or ask me what to do. But it's Edith's boy. If I hear, now or twenty years from now, that you've done anything wrong—if I hear you've hurt it or kept anything from it or done anything at all but give your rotten lives to it like nigger slaves—hell won't be hot enough for you. I'll kill you all."

They took the child. They had learned to obey Jim without thought, and to obey Pemberton just as instantly. They took it and devoted to it the passion of their feeble lives. One after another and all together Pemberton despised the Binghams, but he could use them for the rearing of his son. They named the child Gordon. There seemed to be no reason for the name. They remembered specious stories of Edith's liking for it. They chorused her nine-month's intent

to call her son by those syllables and no others. It was a genteel name—no Bingham had ever had one equal to it. . . . Pemberton did not care. One name was as good as another, and for a child whose life had cost him Edith Abbey there was no name on earth that would not be hateful to his ears as long as he lived.

Windsor in 1892, when Pemberton Abbey built his cottage beside the great Georgian house of John Gale. . . . Senator Whitaker back from Washington for the Summer. Herman Kleinfeld laying tracks about the streets and hitching mules hardly larger than St. Bernards to cars the size of farm wagons. The last transcontinental railroad building a branch to reach this busiest junction. Vincent Malooth still yardmaster, still damning the road that kept him an underling, still battling all who slandered its good name. Jake Cartright, done with saloons forever, boasting of his son who worked in the Senator's bank and had married the Senator's daughter—Jake himself a Republican councilman, chief cog of the Senator's machine. Emil Schmidt, son of Karl, moving his restaurant to Harney Street, putting a glass tank with a jet of water and a hundred mountain trout in his front window. Aaron Dunlap and Sons, Foundry, Smithy, and Machine Shop—Bicycles sold and repaired; wagons manufactured; tools sharpened; rifle barrels re-bored; castings, lathe-work, and wheel-wrighting. Jefferson Farrand, odd lots of surveying and mensuration.

Adam Green, dead and forgotten. Pat McNamara dead, his sons fighting to save what little the Senator had left in their father's holdings. Hi-Yi Windsor, founder of the city, once Mayor, booster, hunter, trader, trapper, prospector—shrivelled and racked

with rheumatism, pensioned off at his livery barn. New names, new faces. Sprague Brothers, Jobbers, who had come into the business Adam Green had dreamed of. Tanser Hallowell, who had shipped his cases of type from Kansas and had thus founded the Windsor Semi-Weekly Herald. Hopkinson Bagley, President of the Senator's new Windsor National. Dr. Holbrook practicing medicine, buying grazing lands, once a month drinking himself into a three days' stupor.

Tree-bordered avenues stretching three ways from the railroads. Fourth and Fifth, Harney and Sacramento and Spring streets paved half a mile each with stone blocks. Wide, level, dusty roads elsewhere. Deep lawns and flower gardens. Paling fences. Iron mastiffs on the grass. Whitaker Park, with a fountain and labeled shrubbery. A square before the Court House, fenced on four sides with iron pipe to which the farmers hitched their teams on Saturday. A quarter-mile oval track at the embryo Fair Grounds. Gutters that ran clean with mountain water. . . . And, along the railroads, warehouses, storehouses, barns, cooperages, breweries. Trade was brisk. It was a boom year. Lots sold quickly. Money was flooding the West. Empire was flooding onward. The Nineties had begun the greatness of the West.

The great men of Windsor were its two millionaires, Senator Whitaker and Herman Kleinfeld. To these was now added Pemberton Abbey who had touched the imagination of the West.

Ivy Bingham, widowed and despairing, came to keep house for Pemberton and to mother his son. "She's the sniveling Bingham," Pemberton explained

to Gale. "Not the sourest—that's Madeline—but the saddest, and sour enough."

He built a shed across the rear of the lot. It was filled with glassware, beakers and tubes and retorts, and all manner of crucibles, reagents, mortars, blow-pipes. "I'm a hell of a metallurgist, John, and no chemist at all. Well, I can buy chemistry by the hundredweight. There's a lot in the rocks no one's found out yet."

He had his plans, but made no revelation of them. . . . He lit a burner on the long table. "Kleinfeld's gas—and it makes money for him. There's enough air in it to prove you don't need coal to make coal-gas. I'd like to take it away from old Herman—there'd be some fun in that. No one yet has taken anything he ever sunk a finger in."

Whenever Pemberton was in the city, Gale might wake at any hour and see lights burning in the laboratory, or be roused from bed at dawn to translate some learned article in a foreign chemists' journal. Stinking rubble began to collect in heaps behind the shed. Inside, there was a small, steam-driven crusher that broke out, by night or day, into the most fiendish noises Gale had ever heard. Clouds of green or violet smoke seeped out through the cracks and sifted down the wind, smelling atrociously. There were explosions that made pock-marks on knives and watches and deposited their sublimates on Pemberton's face. Once the near end of the shed rose up in the air, sailed across the young hedge, and landed in Gale's flowers.

Pemberton rushed after it and met Gale halfway across the garden. His eyebrows and his hair were singed crisp, his face was crusted with green powder, and his shirt was dripping some vile purple stuff that

stank. "John!" he was yelling. "What's this stuff—goldenglow? You have a man in tomorrow and put in a new bed of it and bring his bill to me. Lord, I'm glad it ain't your roses. You and Mrs. Gale cut me dead if I blew up a rose-tree. Look quick and see I didn't."

"Nothing's hurt. Are you?"

"Hell no. That's just a blow-up."

Gale sat down in his disordered garden. "Well, did it teach you anything?"

Pemberton grinned. "Yeh—if I'm going to use that stuff, don't try to compress it."

He was in Windsor only periodically. Wherever there were new veins or processes, there he appeared at once. His money mingled in the city's business, and that too took him away. But mostly he was gone alone into the hills, driving a pack-train ahead of him. He scoured the hidden gulches, memorized the flow of the rocks, and covered the whole State seeking what it had hidden from those who had been before him. He seemed, to Gale, always driving his mules out from Hi-Yi's stable, or coming back swarthy and dust-baked but untired. He had begun, too, to grub-stake old desert-rats who had spent their lives looking for the big bonanza. They had never found it but they would go on searching till they died, and they could comb the country for him.

Gale, too, was working at his job. This country! so high, so illimitable, so cleanly sweet with wind and sun. The eye traveling along those distances was led farther and beyond, was impelled ever higher with that aspiration of mass and line. It was a land of sun and there was no race that had not worshiped sun—a land of life throbbing fiercely in the veins, and there

was no race that had not worshiped the living principle. A land of color and vast healing distances. A land of living color. A land of beauty.

"Beauty!" said Pemberton. "My God, John, you follow my burros for a while and I'll cure you of that talk. Get out in the desert till you stink of sweat and your nose fills with alkali dust and you can't see for a shine that blinds you. Beauty!"

"I'm coming with you, but who ever told you beauty was something pretty that cost you no pains?"

"I don't know beauty. I stick to the rocks."

"Well, I know it, though God set me among a race that are afraid of it. And I'll see that you take me out into it."

So, sometimes, Gale went out with him. They followed the old trails of the mountain-men who had come here for beaver. They touched the buffalo ranges and the lodge-trails and winter-bivouacs of the Indians. They charted the ignorant wanderings of the emigrants. They crossed abandoned mining-camps, old shafts and sluice-works, cattle-trails, dry drives, cut-offs, water-holes, battle-grounds, medicine lodges, flint-quarries. Wherever the West had shown its energy, there John Gale came to follow in its steps.

At home books arrived by the boxful. Eastern bibliographical journals carried Gale's advertisements for Western Americana. The Windsor Herald, and its cousins throughout the West, announced from time to time that John Gale would buy letters, diaries, ledgers, newspapers, cash-books, and all other documents of the vanished frontier. He knocked out the wall that separated two rooms, to make a library. He planted shrubbery that would not mature for ten years, and filled his cellar with vintages that would need even

longer to fulfill their bouquet. He could not be of the West, any more than he had been of Boston, but at least the West had enlisted his mind. He would see whether the heart would follow, whether, at his age, the heart counted.

Pemberton had talked Gale out. For hours they had driven about Windsor behind Gale's chestnuts, less impressive than his grays but sufficiently splendid. Turning the horses over to Gale's coachman, they had gabbled through further hours in the library. Now they were in the laboratory-shed with its stinks and glassware.

Pemberton held a match to another gas mantle. "We'll get electric light in Windsor if I have to rub Kleinfeld's nose in his own gas." He rolled out on the floor two large boulders and bade Gale look at them. The rusty one was the smaller; the larger was a splotchy gray. Gale stirred the larger with his foot, leaned over, grunted it a foot off the floor.

"What do you make of them, John?"

"I've got hundreds of the big one in the foundation of my house."

"Yeh? Don't try to run a chronometer in your house, then." He tossed the two boulders on the long, lead-covered table. "What's the future, John?"

"A historian's prejudice," Gale said carelessly.

"Maybe. You're the only historian I know—and you haven't worked at it long. Comin' out of poetry, what's the future here in this country?"

"Henry Clay Bryce. Free silver. Petroleum. Pullman cars. Stockyards. What you please."

"If it was what I please I wouldn't bother asking.

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But you're wrong, John; best you stick to the past. The future's one of those rocks there. But I'm damned if I know which. If I did, I'd sleep better nights."

"Silver and gold?"

"Hell! Let them that are dug in already hang on to silver and gold—and let fools fight for them. No, copper and iron—and if you think the rusty one is iron, you're wrong."

Pemberton crammed a palmful of rubbed tobacco into his pipe. "It's a funny country, John, this West. It's hog-tied and ham-strung, by and large. The East's got it by the tail. That's what Whitaker and Kleinfeld won't realize till the East decides they are big enough to grab. . . . But the East has got to come West. More and more. Everything in the world's here. . . . It's a queer country. You can walk over it and every step you take you've set your foot on money—money that the East has got to have some day."

His pipe going, he had taken to the floor of the laboratory. As the years passed Gale was to watch that path wear deep into the flooring. "Say you're a steel man, John. You've got works and mines and mills and railroads. You buy ore wherever you can find it—Pennsylvania, Illinois, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Dakota. There's plenty of iron ore in the world and you buy it up. But you don't come West. You don't come to Windsor." He paused by the table and slapped the splotched gray boulder. "There's more iron in this one State than there is in all the East. We drink it in Kleinfeld's water. We breathe it in the dust that blows. We eat it—I do anyway, when Ivy don't wash the spinach enough. But you don't

come West and buy it. You don't buy that boulder for your works to reduce."

"Why not?" Gale perceived that yeasts were at work in his friend.

"It weighs sixty-eight pounds, six ounces, and a few odd grams. You're an iron-man and I'm a metallurgist. You ask me whether I can get iron out of that doly and how much it costs. Well, I can get iron out of it. If I work long enough and hard enough, I can turn over to you say two tablespoons of iron. Good iron, John, and it won't cost you more than fifty dollars. That's why you don't come West. Twenty-five dollars a tablespoonful. You can buy gold for less. So you laugh—for you're an iron man."

Pemberton picked up the rusty smaller boulder. "You want copper, say. This rock is *all* copper—if you only had sense enough to look at it that way. Twenty-one pounds she goes. You come to me and I do some figuring and get to work. Three hundred and thirty-six ounces of rock—and after I've spent"—Pemberton jerked a slip of paper from his pocket—"thirty-four dollars and six bits—I hand you over one ounce even of pure copper. A teaspoonful—one of those pretty spoons Mamie Warren brought back from Niagara Falls. . . . That's where you get a real laugh, John. I tell you this State is *all* copper, even the iron is copper. Thirty-five dollars an ounce? You throw back your head and yell. You can go anywhere and pick up copper rocks the size of this that will give you fifty ounces, sixty, ninety, a hundred-fifty—for twenty cents. Or you can go to the Lake Superior country and carve it off pure with a knife for nothing, three-hundred thirty-six ounces, sixteen ounces virgin copper to the pound."

Once more at the table, Pemberton pushed the two rocks off on the floor. They crashed on the wood and clattered against the chair where Gale sat. He snatched his legs up out of the way. Pemberton turned on him shouting. "Yes, but where'll you be two hundred years from now? Where'll you be in a hundred years? What are you going to do when your iron mines hit granite and run out? Where's your iron coming from when you've milked the veins dry? The world's going faster all the time, an all-steel world, yellin' for iron—where's the iron coming from? You'll come out here, then. You'll beg like a scared woman for this one-per cent rock. . . . Look at that Godforsaken fool, my old man—sinking every cent he ever had in sagebrush and rattlesnakes. I could have shown him mountains of iron they'll be begging for in a century—him and his grandsons could of been kings of the world."

He was standing over Gale's chair, now, and his fingers, fingers that were molded from the fundamental gneiss itself, had dug into Gale's shoulders like so many drills. And he was still shouting. "Yes, what if I find a way, before a hundred years, a way to get those two tablespoonfuls for less than they cost you in Minnesota? What about that, hey? . . . You'll need copper long before you'll need iron. You'll need all there is, too. You'll howl for it like a damned soul in hell. What about my teaspoonful then, hey? And what if tomorrow, or next year, or twenty years from now, I've got a cheap way of getting it out? You and your sixteen ounces to the pound; you and your pure virgin copper—what if it gives out and I'm getting copper from rock that isn't rich enough to draw copper lines on a spectrum? What if I've

worked out a process? What about the Abbey Process?"

He released Gale and, his fervor abating, sat down on the floor with a hand on each of his two boulders. "There you are, John," he said calmly, grinning. "I've got a hand on the future, but I'm damned if I know which hand. It's as sure as a third angle when you've got two and a side. There's an Abbey Process somewhere. It'll come out sometime if I live long enough. Nobody ever used cyanogen on gold till a couple years ago. It was new. It was something nobody had thought about. I'll have something that'll tear this copper or iron out of the hills for a tenth of a cent a ton. I don't know what. I don't know which. I don't know when. . . . It's here, John, right in the West, the whole damned future, the whole world reachin' out for it. But is it copper or is it iron? I'm damned if I know."

Editorial from Tanser Hallowell's *Windsor Herald*, recently grown up to three issues a week.

THE PASSING OF THE GREAT RACE.

Hi-Yi Windsor is dead. One by one they have passed from among us, the pioneers. And now Hi-Yi. The horses champ their oats in his stable. The mourners go about the streets of his metropolis. Friends who knew him, who ever with a frolic welcome took the great emprise of his destinies, who fought at his side when the redskin raided, who knew his heart of iron in the blizzard and the drouth, all who knew him stand with bowed heads and

hungering hearts and listen to the elegies
that memory writes upon the air.

Hi-Yi Windsor is dead.

Let's talk of graves, of worms, and
epitaphs:

Make dust our paper and with rainy
eyes

Write sorrow on the bosom of the
earth.

For he was of the Kings. And now
within the hollow crown that rounds the
mortal temple of the King keeps Death
his court. He came West a young boy
with the morning sun upon his forehead,
a boy in years, but in courage, daring,
resolution, great God how old! The
desert knew his spirit, and the hills his
strength. He came West when only the
buffalo roamed the prairies, when never
a paleface skull had bleached in the
sagebrush. He dies when all the valleys
of his love are pleasant with the house-
hold smokes of cottages, when the irri-
gation ditch has brought its plenty to
the desert, when all his ancient trails
are highways of commerce.

Hi-Yi is dead. And Hi-Yi was of
the Kings. The Great Race. An era
passes with Hi-Yi Windsor, trapper,
trader, trailer, scout, prospector, and
founder of our destinies. We inherit,
we of Windsor, the harvest of his plant-
ing. We bring Empire to his deserts, his
valleys, his canyons, and his peaks—
Empire he made possible. We leap into
the future from his shoulders. And yet,
ye editor surmises, we decline somewhat
from his stature—from him and all the
other heroes who made trails among the
trackless stretches of the West. 'Fore
God, sirs, they were men. 'Tis well,
today, while Hi-Yi Windsor lies dead, to
pause with uncovered head and stare

with saddened, melancholy gaze adown the pathway of the pioneers, who marched into the setting sun. They vanish as we look, but the glance has left its granite in our hearts—the memory of the race that tamed a continent and settled the destiny of a nation. A race of heroes and of demigods. A race of men like gods.

No more. For large white plumes are dancing in our eyes.

“Hi-Yi’s in hell tonight,” Pemberton remarked to Gale. “Anybody counted up his half-breed bastards?”

"But my God! John—you making a Populist speech, you!"

Gale delicately avoided Pemberton's gaze. "One lyric half-hour in a lifetime. You'll allow me that. I thought it amusing to incite to war. And I only preached the eldest of all lies, the power of the people."

"Yah! Serve you damn well right if they had it. Have I got to tell you :gain, it ain't the Grange that's stirred up the State, it ain't the people yellin' for blood and going out for it. It's Mordecai Krug and them that belong to him. Who wants free silver? Why, you beetlehead, folks that own silver mines."

"I'm a high-church Mugwump," Gale said pensively. "My blood is thin and cool and sluggish—but it leaps at anyone's taking a kick at anyone in power. One illusion is as good as another—I don't say the embattled farmers are right, but they are frightening portly and reverend people and they have most distressingly scared the Back Bay. Listen to them——" he hunched a shoulder toward the tumult in the square. "The plebs never yelled louder in Rome. It's energy, Pemberton, and it's change—and I'm on the side of energy and change. It's activity. It's motion."

They were sitting on the stone steps of the Court House. The streets were choked with wagons, surreys, buckboards, buggies, and every kind of equipage that could bring in the peasantry. The square, across from

the Court House, packed with the electorate, was indeed a scene for a historian. It was the people; it was revolution—Yorktown and Mecklenburg, Jefferson and Jackson, Lovejoy and Garrison and John Brown. Righteousness had risen, the eternal democracy, and oppression would be broken forever. Henry Clay Bryce, on the platform, was promising as much.

Bryce's voice had its way with these farmers—as it would with the crowded Capitol hereafter. He was the last of the orators. Later, when he quarreled with Bryan, he was to be called the last of the gladiators as well. Gale and Pemberton, making their way nearer the rostrum, could feel his power holding his audience like an electric field. It was no peaceful power. He was calling for the sword—for bomb and rifle and bayonet.

Gale smiled. "Force to the uttermost," he whispered. "It's the old summons. Felons, debtors, and slaves—they've always listened to it."

"Only by force shall you prevail!" Bryce was shouting.

Right was their heritage, he told them, and if they would merit it with might, no tyranny and no corruption could withstand them. This was the hour of the new and final revolution in America. Let the people, at last, be free.

"Sockless Jerry himself," Pemberton said, "could learn a lot from Bryce. He'll get ahead. Bryce'll go far."

The crowd was altogether identified with him. They yipped and roared with him, they swayed left or right as his arms moved, they wept when he bade them. But mostly they saw themselves armed with

pike and torch going out from behind barricades to erect a guillotine.

"You will observe," Gale said, "they mean no good to the Back Bay. The tents of my tribe are to be wasted, and its infants put to the sword. That's why my heart warms toward Bryce. It's the rising of the people, Pemberton, it's the folk taking to the sword, and I rejoice to see it once more on the earth."

"What's it ever got done?"

"Nothing at all. But it has made a noise. It has banged things about, and brought about sound and color and fiery signs in the heavens. It's always the gaudiest show, the most enthralling spectacle heaven grants us. . . . That elder Gracchus there—he'll give us entertainment before he's done."

There was a last shower of rockets in that golden voice. The crowd roared and began to relax, its visions of coin and wealth dissolving. Sunset caught the dust above the square. Little groups moved about under the misty crimsoned gold. The streets filled with traffic. Bryce would be speaking again, in an hour. Tomorrow he would begin another circuit of the State. Everywhere his name was passed about—Bryce the liberator, Bryce the prophet, Bryce the general-in-chief. The face of the men who talked about him were rapt and intent—and uncannily alike.

"That's the charm of it," Gale confided to Pemberton. "You can actually see, against all reason, men feeling and acting together. That's unity—the matrix of religions and crusades—and revolutions."

"Swine," Pemberton said. "Ask my old man what they are. Ask me. But they can be handled. They can be jobbed."

Congress adjourned and Senator Whitaker came home. Through his offices galloped the manipulators of his wrecked machine. Jake Cartright, the chief of them, was reported to sleep on the directors' table, and to be waked thrice a night by some new fear of the Senator's. Nowhere was there any headway to be made against the farmers. Some of Tom's best had, in fact, deserted to them.

Tom Whitaker had grown fat and was growing old. He strutted still, and wore his congressional Prince Albert and black Stetson as cockily as he had worn his flowered vest. But he was depressed and shaken: Pemberton smelled panic as the door opened to him. Tom was alone at his desk, staring out at the corner of Fourth and Sacramento streets, where one of Kleinfeld's gas-lamps had just sputtered alight. Pemberton saw the hand on the desk tremble, and observed that the steel-gray mustache was gnawed untidily.

"Tom," Pemberton said, "is it true you killed your man when you were young?"

The Senator pivoted the chair toward him. "For God's sake, Abbey, I'm in no mood for pleasantries."

"Want to talk about Bryce in the Senate, two years from now?"

"The Senate! He's out for the House."

"Nobody bluffs me," Pemberton confessed. "You know he's out for your job. You know he'll get it, too."

"Abbey, it's civil war! In God's name can't people see that much? We'll come to fighting in the streets. I tell you it's revolution—they'll tear down every institution we've lived by. They'll track their slime into the Capitol. They'll raise a red flag above the

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White House. It's anarchy, it's bloody revolution right here in the United States——"

"And that's going to cost money, huh? Well, Bryce agrees with you. He'll gut you with that G. A. R. cavalry sabre of his he rants about. Yeh, Tom, they'll take over the House and the Senate and the Courts. They'll put Sockless Jerry or Coin Harvey or maybe Bryce in the White House. Then they'll grab the railroads and grab your bonds. They'll strip you to your skin—and maybe nail that to a barn door."

The Senator began to pace the room. "I never know how to take you. But whether you're in jest or earnest, you tell the truth. The country's on fire, Abbey. It's going to burn up." He banged a fist on the table. "Good God, can't it be stopped? Is the game over already? Is it that easy to overthrow a government? I love my country, Abbey——"

"At twelve per cent. So do I. You ought to stop slobberin', Tom, you're not hurt. Listen, this will burn out like it always has. Only, it's bound to burn a few haystacks first—and you're one. You'll never go back to the Senate. Maybe you could if you were one-tenth the man Bryce is, but they didn't draw you to his scale. There's no way of keepin' Bryce from carrying the Legislature this Fall or two years from now, when you come up. She'll burn two years more anyway. It's Bryce's Legislature this Fall and it'll be his two years from now. You can buy anything but a fool, Tom, and that Legislature will all be fools."

Pemberton looked contemptuously at the distraught statesman. There was no room in his world for cowardice. "But Hell!" he went on, "forget the Senate. What you're after is money. You can't afford to lose your grip in Windsor. And if you don't get

your tail up in the air we can beat Bryce for the House this Fall. If we do that, nobody's going to lose money in Windsor."

Whitaker struck the table again. "I don't have to lose. What are you people for? I'm going back to the Senate."

"God, how I hate a man who can't admit a fact he don't like the looks of. . . . We can beat Bryce in Windsor this Fall, and if we do that none of us lose money. But you'll have to quit fighting Kleinfeld. What did you tear out of the First National for?"

"You know my feeling for Kleinfeld. I won't deal with a thieving Dutch upstart."

"So you hightailed out of the First National—lost money—gave it up to Herman—had to start a new bank. You start the Windsor National because you're afraid of Herman in the First National. Tom, your liver's a bag of saffron, and mildewed saffron at that. What are you going to do now he's bought into the Great Western? Give that up to him?"

Whitaker groaned. "I don't know, Abbey, I don't know. Every one is after me all at once, snapping like curs. Kleinfeld has backed one of the Spragues to start a new newspaper—and that will be snapping at me. I can't fight Bryce for Kleinfeld and I can't fight Kleinfeld for Bryce. And Kleinfeld wants to get into the city. He wants the Council. He wants the Mayor. If he gets them——"

"Bang goes boodle you've always kept for yourself, and bang goes a lot of smut on your name. Well, I've bought into the Great Western, too. I tell you, you and Herman have got to quit smacking at each other and get together. All of us. Or Bryce gets the House and he gets the city, too, and we'll all lose money.

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Fighting each other when there's money in keeping the peace! Don't be a fool, Tom."

"Talk to Kleinfeld," Tom said bitterly. "Tell him his damned German bull-headedness is losing him money."

"I have," Pemberton said.

He faced Henry Clay Bryce in the dingy room above a hay and grain store that served as headquarters for the People's Party. There had been talk, friendly enough, that harked back to the rape of the Sunrise Queen. Then Pemberton boarded him.

"When I made a half-million for you, Henry, I didn't expect I'd live to see you use it havin' faith in bankrupts."

"When I taught you mathematics I didn't think you'd use it computing interest in a bank."

"Don't fret about the bank. I'm a hard-rock man. I might have swallowed the farmers, at that, but by God! I never thought I'd see you taking orders from Mordecai Krug."

"You won't live long enough to. But I'd make a bedfellow of the devil himself, to help out this campaign."

"You've slept in lots of beds, anyway. Came West a G. A. R. Republican, didn't you? Wrung a job out of the bloody shirt. I've heard you wave it ever since I was knee high to a shingle-nail. Yeh, you been a Stalwart longer'n McKinley. And now look at you—a Stalwart runnin' head-on into the Grange and the Knights of Labor. Damned if it ain't a wide bed. Yeh, and that deathless feud you had with Krug. I thought you'd get his scalp—I thought you'd pay him

off for disgracin' you. Hell, you sell out like a Cart-right cub. How much did it cost him to get you for Free Silver?"

Populism was used to insult and reserved its violence for more effective use. Bryce's daily bread had been insult, and would be till he died. Pemberton got no display in answer to his taunt. "Can you buy every man in the world?" Bryce asked him slowly.

"Everybody but fools. And I know you're not a fool."

Bryce offered him a long cheroot with a straw embedded in the middle of it. His eyes searched Pemberton. "That's a bit of knowledge you'd do well to hang on to. Oh, you're a fine lad, Pemberton—you're steel-cored, and powerful, and contemptuous of fools. Here's another bit of wisdom for you: only a fool is sure of anything, even of other men's folly. Bang your way through all those you can scare, and buy as many as you can. But don't think all men can be scared, or bought, either—by you or Krug or another."

"Buy 'em wholesale if need be, Henry. What would the whole People's Party cost?"

"The people's freedom, Pemberton."

"Yah! Or enough votes to get us 16 to 1—for Krug."

"Freedom. You're a queer cripple, Pemberton—for you can't see that this time it's the people themselves—risen and awake. This time they're on the march, and if it's bankers or kings or armies or Senators they must ride down, well, so be it. It's the voice of God from heaven."

"Mordecai Krug, you mean. If he's got you thinkin' he's God, Henry, he's a better man than me—or you."

The whole country, it seemed, agreed with Bryce or with Gale, for the fire was spreading. At Massilion the army of the Lord and Jacob Coxey, with banners and tabernacles, began its march on Washington. Along its route people confidently expected blood—even to the bridle-rings that had been mentioned. All at once other armies, elsewhere, began marching eastward for justice and the glory of God. One of them, known as Kelley's, started from California, and in this one the soldiers of righteousness were plentifully leavened with thugs. Windsor learned how this town had been sacked, that sheriff killed, such chicken coops stripped and such stores plundered. The Herald and the Record blistered with headlines, for Windsor was on the route of march, and the stores did a fine business in revolvers.

Several days before they could be expected, Kelley's Army did indeed roar into Windsor, six hundred strong, in a freight train they had pirated a hundred miles west of the city. They settled like locusts on the stores and gardens near the railroad yards. They took over a fresh locomotive and then another when they had wrecked the first. They set fire to a half-mile train of freight cars. And then, after hardly an hour in the city, with the whistle shrieking, they roared on eastward.

Gale and Pemberton drove down to the railroad yards where, once the peril was over, most of the city had gathered. The fire department and a hundred volunteers were dealing with the burning freight. And all of Windsor was aghast.

Gale smiled at the curling smoke. "A little fire hurts nothing. It takes heat to get work done. But

I've wondered why the agents of an aroused people are always felons."

But Pemberton laughed outright. "Done more for us than a month of headlines. If they'd stayed all day we could beat Bryce tomorrow."

Kelley's army rode on into the desert, where presently it dissolved away, but it had done Pemberton's work in Windsor. Guards were now drilling every evening, and the newspapers had seen the first of the promised blood. Now the railroad switchmen, mechanics and car-repairers went on strike and this was Revolution itself. The railroads, everywhere embarrassed by similar walkouts, hurried men and guns and money to Windsor. Their officials conferred with the alarmed authorities. Whitaker grew more pallid, Kleinfeld more florid.

"Did you buy the strike?" Gale asked mildly.

Pemberton grunted. "Here and there. Never pay for what you can get for nothing. But hell, what good are anarchists when they won't even heave a bomb? Have I got to import some?"

He carried the same complaint to the councils of the authorities. "Cartright," he demanded, "is it true you've shut off the saloons' credit?"

"But, Mr. Abbey, how can they get money from men who ain't earnin' wages? Mr. Whitaker's bank won't give me credit."

"Listen, Tom, when you got into this, I meant you to stay in. God knows I can't ask you to use your nerve—but use mine. You let Jake carry as many saloons as he can. And you, Jake—give the beer to 'em if you have to—give 'em hard liquor, give 'em anything. If we're going to get action——"

"Loafers and drunkenness," Tom protested, "the

city will be a bear-pit. There'll be fighting—outrages——”

Herman Kleinfeld popped up from the chair that bore the burden of his weight, ran to Whitaker, and embraced him. “Tom, it is Pemberton’s plan. Give him only one liddle outrage and we will bust Bryce in the nose.”

“There’s sense, Tom. Herman ain’t quite a fool. One little outrage, but I’d rather have a couple of big ones.”

Whitaker shuddered. “I can’t stand bloodshed. I’d never be able to lift my head again. Good God, Pemberton—you’d plunge us into civil war. Not only us—if it starts anywhere it will run like fire in stubble.”

“Then get out and hide your head in the barn,” Pemberton said. “We’re in this now, and we don’t want you or any other gutless wonder in the way. We’re out to bust the People’s Party in Windsor for good and all. Will you fish or cut bait?”

Whitaker sat down. He could hold no one’s gaze. “I’ll stick,” he whispered.

“See you do! Herman, you got any business near the yards that could stand a fire?”

“I have thought of that, Pemberton. Best nothing of mine. Young Steve Dunlap’s drawers factory—he has got that insured. Best you set fire to that, if you want, eh, Aaron? Your money is safe.”

“Won’t take a chance of the insurance company gettin’ out from under on a fire of yours, huh?”

A groan from Whitaker roused Herman to further consolation. “It is Pemberton’s plan we must scare Windsor plenty, Tom. If there is enough scare, then no one in Windsor will vote for Bryce in November.

Bryce will be beat for the House and all his ticket in the city. We will keep the city for ourselves, and no one anywhere will be hurt. There is money in it for us, Tom. Pemberton is a bright boy—oh, more good sense in his liddle finger than his Papa ever had. If we but once get us a good scare into Windsor—then we will be safe.”

Tanser Hallowell, complacently drunk, offered his contribution. “Can’t this town afford a daily paper?”

Pemberton nodded. “Good hunch. That will sting Herman, too, for the Record will have to follow suit. We’ll give the city fits with every front page. Now, you”—he turned on the railroad officials—“are all your guards eunuchs? You get hold of some that ain’t afraid to bust a skull open. Hallowell, you stay drunk enough to see horrors, and write ’em up. Jake, don’t shut off credit on drinks—give ’em away if you have to. Herman, you and Tom can shut down on the grocers—cash for food, tick for liquor. But we’ll get action if I have to set fire to the Windsor National. Turn on the terror.”

The Herald and the Record, now dailies, obliged him with as much terror as they could mass, faithfully seeing attempted arson in bonfires, anarchists in casual chicken-thieves, and mobs in desultory saloon-brawls. The railroad built a ten-foot fence round its yards, topped it with three strands of barbed wire, and set fortified platforms in the angles. All this meant the defence of peaceable folk against the rising tide of anarchy, which was played by a couple of hundred jovial Windsorites who were enjoying their vacation.

Few householders slept by night, but no violence answered Pemberton’s desires. The strikers enjoyed

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their holiday in cool saloons while the blacklegs sweated in the yards behind the barricade.

"Can't you buy a riot?" Gale asked.

"If I have to. It would work better if I didn't buy it. You don't approve, John?"

Gale shrugged. "You're beyond good and evil—I merely observe. They made me myths about the Frontier, and I found they were otherwise. But you—well, if I have to decide you're an illusion, I'll write no histories."

Gale moodily contemplated the desert stars, an arm's length away. "Where are you going, Pemberton? What are you about? Do you know? Have you any idea?"

It was a question not to be answered. Gale could not answer it then, nor ever afterward.

But at last two or three strikers tried to stroll through the railroad yards, and the guards promptly weighted them with buckshot. The saloons thereupon grew indignant, and the next day a few of the most belligerent strikers climbed to the roofs of shacks and sniped at the guards on the fence-top. Thereupon, with revolution actually firing rifles, the newspapers felt very deeply grieved and the city prepared for riot. Cartright's free beer helped. And the next day, after the guards had accurately drilled holes in a couple of their assailants, a mob marched on the railroad yards.

Alarms and excursions. Two hundred men growling together. The crash of stones through windows on the route of march. . . . A few aimless shots. . . . They reached the park in front of the station and recoiled backward before the discharge of shotguns.

They broke up into platoons and rushed about seeking for protected angles and for vulnerable places in the fence. One group piled ties against the fence, drenched them with kerosene, and, before the guards arrived, set fire to them. Another, protected by the guns of its calmer half, began to batter a gate with a telegraph pole.

Inside the barricade, dispersed in convenient groups, were enough gunmen to have settled a minor war— assembled to smash the revolution the authorities had hoped for. Pemberton and his assistants directed squads of them to mount to the sandbagged platforms, whence, at their leisure, they began to let off guns in the direction of the mob.

A quarter of a mile from the station there was a water-tank. The fence made a bow around it and here a group of rioters succeeded in smashing an entrance. A switch-engine manned by blacklegs had, at that moment, stopped to fill its tank. The strikers advanced on the crew, who fled across the yards screaming. Vincent Malooth was at hand. He had done his best to run his railroad single handed. All day and all the night before he had been bullying strike-breakers to their work, trying by sheer inspiration to teach them their jobs. He came now from repairing a switch they had smashed. He heard the crash when the strikers broke through the fence and saw them swarm on the locomotive, sending a volley of revolver shots after the fleeing crew. He was running, yelling as he ran. He charged into the midst of the strikers, swearing, swinging a sledge-hammer.

Pemberton, ten yards in front of a score of strike-breakers, rounded the front of the engine in time to hear the shots that ended Vincent Malooth's term as

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yardmaster in Windsor. Before such fury, the strikers melted away. Pemberton waved his toughs after them through the gap in the fence.

"Shoot, you fools!" he was shouting as he left them behind.

He followed one striker up an alley behind the Dunlap factory. The striker ran at full speed into the blind wall that ended it, turned back, screamed to see so much wrath in a man's face, and shot. The bullet ripped cloth and flesh from Pemberton's shoulder, but Pemberton lifted the man from the ground and began to beat the terrified face with his fist. Later, his own men caught up with him and, appalled, dragged him away.

The terror was a success. The day after Pemberton's riot, the strikers accepted the harshest terms the railroad could devise. Property had been destroyed by revolution, and blood had been shed—in Windsor. Therefore the city remained, for years, an island of safe Republican propriety in a Populist sea. When November came, Whitaker and Kleinfeld kept the city government private to themselves, and Windsor, in its district, was enough to beat Bryce for Congress. He swamped the Legislature, however, and two years later rode over Tom to the Senate, where he stayed till he died. But Windsor was safe. . . .

"You got a picture of the voice of God, John?" Pemberton asked. "Yeh, you and Bryce—heard how freedom splashed blood to the bridle-rings, didn't you? Oh, sure, you can count on the Frontier."

And to Tom and Herman, at the bank, "Now, learn sense. Don't try to make money cuttin' each other's

throat. Money lays on the ground here, waiting to be picked up—if it didn't, you'd still be dealin' from a cold deck and shovin' logs at my old man's saws. You don't need to sweat for it—just stoop over and pick it up. Stick together, you two, and try to keep your hands out of each other's pockets. Get out and grab the State. You better—for when the East gets ready to grab us off, you'll need all you can get."

Tom, perpetually disturbed, glowered at the floor. He was a timorous man and Pemberton had already come to be his chief fear. But Herman looked speculatively at the young man who had done what he had set out to do.

"You are a bright boy, Pemberton," Herman said. He spat into the sawdust-filled drawer of his desk. "You are maybe a liddle too bright. Maybe some one should take you out and teach you a lesson, hey?"

Pemberton moved through the dingy gas-light to stand above Herman's fat and shining head. "When you get ready, Herman, you just come a-runnin'. I learn fast."

John Gale, through his study window, saw two horses stop beneath the trees in front of Pemberton's house. His heart warmed when a familiar length of dusty leather swung from one saddle. Pemberton was back from the hills again, and the graying November skies counted little. Pemberton gave his reins to the boy who had ridden with him from the livery stable; the horses trotted off. Gordon flew down the steps and leaped into his father's arms. Would he?—no, he was going into the cottage. No—yes! he had turned and, with Gordon riding his shoulders, was crossing the lawn.

They met where Gale's chrysanthemums still lifted white and yellow blossoms above the autumn ruin of the garden. Their hands joined. It was a meeting of reliant, tested spirits.

"No bonanzas, Pemberton?"

"Nothing but rocks. The lousy Indians holding up, John?"

"They progress a few pages nearer the end."

Even before he would speak to Ivy Bingham or sluice the dust of a dozen canyons from his face, Pemberton went out to the sheds behind the house, grown larger in two years, where his chemists worked at his schemes. Gale turned back across his frost-slain garden. He glanced up at the peaks. November had dusted them unevenly with snow; they stood up gray and steel-blue, bleak, and forbidding. November in

the hills. November in the heart. And, to oppose it, only the meeting of two friends.

Pemberton's riot was two years past, and the two years had had their acid. Gale's wife had never truly rallied after the birth of their child—of Hope—and, just a year ago, when Hope was some eighteen months old, she had died. With her had died as much of John Gale as felt the world worth looking at. Yes—he glanced again at the peaks that had been beautiful in their time—yes, quite all of him that answered to the sun. The sense of doom he had never lost in his marriage. It had been cold about his heart. When the child came, all three of them were bound together in this certainty of inescapable loss.

He stood at his northern windows while the short afternoon went out in gold and lavender. The familiar scene, the old, well memorized paradox: the peaks to the eastward, and, westward, the growing town with whose life he had, inexplicably, joined his own. . . . Hope and Pemberton and the book—only these were left to him. Could he hold work, friend, and daughter secure against the great wind of loss? He was cold within. His eyes were held by the darkness that marched like an army up the valley of Windsor.

"The baby is sleeping," the nurse said, behind him.

He went upstairs with her and stood above the child's bed. A night-candle flickered shadows across her face. He thought, in the dimness, that the child looked thin.

He clutched the nurse's arm. "Is she frail?" he whispered. "Is she weak? Should she be bigger—plumper?"

"Laws, Mr. Gale, she's as fat as a little squab. Months short of three years—and look at her. If

you say so, I'll give her a wee bit paregoric every day."

Fool! As soon as he could see Dr. Holbrook in the morning, he would have an intelligent nurse. But he would see to it with his own hands that no frailty should claim Hope. Horses, tennis rackets, bicycles—whatever it needed. She should dive naked into snow banks. She should climb peaks no woman had ever set foot upon. She should swim amidst floating ice. She should be copper and steel—and he would hold the doom from her with his own wrists.

No light burned in his friend's cottage, though from hour to hour he looked across the garden to find one. Toward midnight, however, the laboratory windows blazed up, and for an hour Pemberton's distorted shadow crossed them. Gale gathered up his sheets of pale blue paper etched with his minute pen, pushed away his portfolios, overturned a stack of moth-eaten pamphlets, and went out to the buttery. He heaped a tray with bottles of ale, small cheeses, and crisp biscuits. The black focus of his melancholy withdrew.

Presently they were talking—and Gale's renewed life glowed with his tireless study of his friend. His understanding was as restless as Pemberton, who was fire itself. But fire that, now, burned more steadily, more controllably than before. Pemberton's hand cast a wide shadow on the wall, the fingers lengthened grotesquely, curved like a suave and planned tool. And somehow, Gale realized, that was what Pemberton was coming to be, a tool fitted to its work. But——

"God above!" he broke out. "To what end? To what use? Do you know even what you do? There's no knowing why you do it or what uses you to get it done. No knowing, Pemberton. They crush you

down in their stamp-mills, they sear you with their acids, blow their blasts through you, and sublimate the thin deposit of you as they will, when it is needed for their ends."

"They?" said Pemberton. "Who?"

"I wish to God I knew. Flame leaps across the darkness and you get something done—something changed, at least—and the spider of God has stung you to a dancing agony of labor. And you stagger down the corridors of this world into the corridors of hell—bloody, laboring, deluded, dancing your mad steps. But me—no, thank God. I sit back and watch and wonder and bleed more slowly, more exquisitely, without a skin. What for? What do they want to mint out of you? What ore in you are they jealous of?"

Pemberton emptied another pint of ale into a pewter mug Gale had brought with him from Beacon Hill. "John," he said, after he had let a swallow of it linger on his tongue, "you're a learned cuss. I generally suspicion too much brains—I'm leery of them. But you've got to hand it to me, too. I probably know more ways to get copper out of a rock than anybody else in the world."

He was, Gale could see, contemptuous of himself for taking pride in such a truth. The pride came from a desire to seem wise in his friend's eyes. And that was mirthful—that Pemberton Abbey should feel the need of justification to one who sat in his study and wrote about redskins.

"It's still copper, then?"

"Has been these two years. Always will be."

"And when?"

Pemberton grinned. "God don't deal pat hands.

Sometime or other. There'll be time left." He dismissed the future, the Abbey process, the certainty that the thing would solve itself sometime, as not worth talking about. He picked up the bottle he had emptied. "Ever see a trick?"

Balancing it across his palm, he looked at it for a moment, then swiftly closed his fingers over it. A muscle stood out across his wrist and ran, an inch high, up his sleeve. The bottle crumbled and fell with confused jinglings on the tray. Gale shot out of his chair, visioning the spurt of slashed arteries. Pemberton held up his hand, unhurt.

"There's no danger if you don't let it slip—if you hold it hard enough. Lord, I did that in a hundred bars when I was a kid learning to mine. It moved more'n one drunk whore to stake me to a meal when I needed it."

A hope burned its moment in Gale's heart. There was no danger, if you held it hard enough.

"So I'm pullin' out of the Great Western." Pemberton continued a confidence he had not begun. "I'll stick to the rocks." Paper and tobacco, in his hand, became without perceptible motion a cigarette. "No guts. Herman—he'd crawl a mile on his belly to steal a dollar or to get a woman without paying for her, and nobody ever scared him—much. But he's too damn Dutch. Risk a dollar past tomorrow? Not him. And Whitaker—oh my God. John! He ties his pants on so's he won't shake them off. Put Tom Whitaker beside a pound of butter and you couldn't tell which to wrap. I can't travel with 'em. A man's got to have guts and a spine."

Pemberton chuckled. "Tom's got a daughter, you know—I mean, I know. Not Will Cartright's wife

—I don't mean that one. Nope, Tom fell for Madame Paris before she had a house of her own—fact is I think Tom set her up in business. Sure—kid's in school in Philadelphia. Tom don't know I know."

Gale had thought that Pemberton could not sit much longer in any chair. Suddenly he rose straight out of it and took to the floor. The currents were on again. "Hell—they see nothin', they learn nothin', they can't be shown nothin'. Grab the dollar you stub your toe on, close your eyes, and run like hell and bury it." He flung back the dark curtains from an eastern window: the cold, veneered peaks rose up in moonlight. Pemberton went mad, surely, with the moon. In two steps he reached the table, seized a ruler, and flung himself on his knees on the floor. "Look, here's Windsor Canyon and the dam they've got. Here's the Ophir and their other dam. Here's their canals west of Blaine, west of Windsor."

He made furrows in the rug. He strode about among them. The light from a shaded porcelain lamp threw fissures across his cheeks. The brass edge of the ruler shot glints along the walls, and floor. Gale leaned forward, his breath uneven.

"And here's a canyon with half the water of the Ophir. Here's another. Here's another. Here's a fall. Here's a dry lakebed. Here's the plain straight west, miles and miles, clean to the big desert. Thousands of square miles, millions of acres." He brushed a hand through his hair. Gale wondered whether a finger-touch would strike a spark from his cheek. "Put a dam here. Put another one here—and here—and here—run a flume down there. Drive a tunnel through that ridge, ten miles long if you have to. It don't matter how—just get the water to that land.

John——” here he rose to his full height above the radiance of the lamp and his voice came down from shadow, from gloom, harsh and vibrant, a voice out of the rocks themselves, lonely and irresistible and damned. But his hands were squarely in the light, where they closed into fists, were opened, were flung out. “John—you could take that land and fill it with thousands of people, people who aren’t born yet, who never yet lifted a spade. You could own it and them—hold them in your hands, do anything you wanted with them. Tear ’em apart if you wanted. They’re yours. You made ’em. You own ’em. And nothing in God’s name could touch you—not the Treasury or the Army or an act of God.”

He sat down on the floor, quite placid. “Mention a thousand dollars to Herman Kleinfeld and you’ll have to set up by your own bed so he won’t cut your throat to get it. But mention a million and he gets the ague. And Tom—mention four-bits to Tom and he runs home bawling, for fear he’ll lose it. Too big for them—too much money. They’ve seen a ghost and it shook a fist at them.”

Another cigarette appeared to roll itself along his thumb. His chest arched like a hoop: twin geysers of smoke belched from his nostrils. “Damn a man that’s scared! They could fasten the Great Western on this State till a man would have to ask them if he could sneeze in his own handkerchief. But they’re scared. What a litter of boar-swine they are, John. How my old man knew the truth about them.”

“Swine?” Gale said, still giddy from the electrical display. “Swine? I wonder. . . .” He went to a shelf and began to leaf through a book. “Some day you’ll come to reading books, Pemberton. When

you're a cripple in Jim Abbey's chair. . . . Listen."

He read: "'But I could have easily vindicated human kind from the imputation of singularity upon the last article, if there had been any swine in that country (as unluckily for me there were not), which although it may be a sweeter quadruped than a *Yahoo*, cannot, I humbly conceive, in justice pretend to more cleanliness; and so his Honour himself must have owned, if he had seen their filthy way of feeding, and their custom of wallowing and sleeping in the mud.'"

Gale smiled. Pemberton held out his hand. "Swift? Never heard of him. He knew Kleinfeld. I'll read it, John, if you say so."

The incident amused Gale when, after Pemberton had been moved by the graying east to get back to his sheds, he sat remembering the night's vigor. Give books to Pemberton Abbey! One did not take the last sacrament till more earthly medicines were useless—nor drug one's mind with books while there was a world to be made. To be made? Gale cocked one shoulder. That did not seem to be precisely Pemberton's function.

"I'm getting out," Pemberton said. Three years ago he would have shouted aloud to see life thus return to Tom Whitaker's eyes; now his soul grinned but he was saying nothing.

"Will you build my canal?" he asked again—giving himself the pleasure of alarming them.

"Was there never an Abbey without a big scheme?" Herman Kleinfeld asked. "You are tso clever, Pemberton, up to a point. Then you are a fool. My Gott, it would be five million dollars *now*——" he wailed,

"to begin with. Not Gott himself could tell how much when it is done. This whole State would not pay for it."

"I'm selling. I'll take a hundred twenty-five a share."

They spent a week explaining that no gentleman would ask for one hundred and fifty per cent profit on stock that he had, for courtesy, been allowed to buy at the treasury price. They bought him out, in the end, and the pulse of the inner Windsor was quiet again. Pemberton put away irrigation reluctantly: he had crossed too many deserts not to desire them watered and grown green. But he was a hard-rock man. He sent his prospectors forth. He hired and fired chemists for his sheds. He drove himself, through experiments he hardly understood, his mind rigid against the rigid inertia of his ignorance, to bring something to be in his sheds. The Abbey Process—sometime—if he lived long enough.

He found, meanwhile, the engineer he was meant to find. He had driven down to the railroad yards where, the rumor was, a man was dying horribly. Three shunted freight cars, running on their own momentum, had cleared an open switch just too late to miss a free engine that was backing into it. When Pemberton reached the wreck, a crowd had gathered round the heap of splintered wood, twisted iron, and broken freight. If there had been cries they had ceased, but, pushing through the crowd, he could see a distorted body all but covered up with debris.

"Dead?" he asked.

"Passed out, anyway." The workmen attacked the heap with an axe. Conceivably, they could clear it before the week was up.

"God's name!" Pemberton leaped ahead and tugged at the splintered beam on top of the heap.

"Get away, Abbey," he heard. He stepped aside and saw a stooped and gangling newcomer, a tall, weatherworn man with a sand-colored face. The man stood with his head bent, his freckled hands braced on his hips, studying. For some moments he stood so, his eyes half closed, and Pemberton could observe his complete absorption in the job. After a while the man picked up a shovel, went almost to the other end of the heap, pushed the shovel under a broken beam, and pried it upward.

"Pull that bent rod out, Abbey," he directed. "Now, that six-by-eight—no, t'other. O. K." He pried out another irrelevant piece and stood back, dusting his hands, and turned away. "You can lift him out now," he remarked.

Pemberton waited to see that the man could actually be lifted out, and then took after his deliverer. "How'd you figure that out, Jeff?" he said.

"My God, wa'n't it plain enough?" Jefferson Far-
rand asked, exasperated. "When you got a jam, there's got to be a center and a key to it, don't they? Well, find 'em."

"Know anything about mining, Jeff?"

"Guess I could shoot a transit underground 's well 's on top."

Pemberton grabbed his shoulder. "I don't know how much the city pays you. Add whatever Herman lets you pick up on his contracts. I've hired you for twice the total."

"You got a mine?" Jeff's face seemed always sleepy and peaceful and a little bored. He was as tall as Pemberton when, rarely, he straightened up.

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"I've got a hundred. I'll open one up next year and sell it to Krug. Some day we'll have a mine—a real mine, Jeff. You be ready to go into the hills in February."

Jeff nodded. "Herman's a fat slob. I won't miss him. Say, Pemberton, did you lick me last or did I whale hell out of you?"

Pemberton's shoulders hunched under his overcoat. "Which way would you bet?"

Bells tinkled frivolously. A cutter, behind a horse too good for a woman, slowed down just ahead of him. A woman's voice through the dusk.

"Pemberton! Oh Pemberton! I *know* it's you."

He stepped over the ridge of snow and stood beside the cutter. "I told you you didn't have nerve enough to come," he said contemptuously.

Her free hand reached out for his cheek and lay warmly against it. She leaned out of the sleigh, but drew no response from him. "It was Joe. Oh, I would have come—you know I would. He came home just when I was ready. His father was sick—I had to go with him. . . . Pemberton, I'll come tomorrow."

"I know you will."

He had not moved an inch nearer her but stood there, above his ankles in snow, so unmoved, so beyond being moved, that she could not contain her joy in him. Abandoning the reins, she flung her arms out to his shoulders, leaned against him, and drew his frosty cheeks down to rest against hers. After a moment the nervous horse started away. Pemberton leaped into the sleigh, and fought a momentary bout for

mastery. The horse quieted; Marian Warren saw no reason to loose the grasp she had on Pemberton's arm. She lay against a shoulder unimaginably strong. He saw, in the dusk, her face drowsy and sated with love, half spent with a passion too great for it. He felt her shudder as his arm moved, holding the reins—felt her shuddering and warm, and despised her. She had been as easy as sleep, as easy as breathing. Something in his throat was wry and sour.

She roused herself when they had gone a mile. "You'll have to get out, Pemberton. Some one will see."

"See!" Interest came back for a moment. He turned the horse toward the downtown streets.

"Where are you going?" Her tense hand reached for the reins.

"I'm going to drive you through town."

"You *do* love me!" The ecstasy of her pulses thickened her voice. Shoulder and hip and knee she pressed against him, and her cheeks were warm in the frost.

But Kleinfeld's gas lamps cast too dim a luster for any one but the most curious to tell from the curb who rode in any sleigh. So, after he had driven through every street that might conceivably be filled and made sure that Joseph Warren would be at dinner before his wife, he left her.

"You'll come tomorrow," he said.

"Yes, oh yes, Pemberton." Her hands fluttered a final, lingering, reluctant touch.

God! Were there no women in the world worth the turn of a wrist? None who could not be had for the turn of a wrist?

Somehow the earth had labored and brought forth a husband for Ivy Bingham. She was to leave the cottage and her nephew, and go back to the soil whence the Bingham sprang, some incredible mate having miraculously appeared. Some peasant whose ears could endure her lamentations. And Madeline, whose tears were bitterer still, was to come in her place.

"Much joy she'll have," Ivy intoned, standing before Pemberton while he ate the last supper she would get for him. "Here in the house of the man that don't remember he was married to her own sister. To think I'd live to keep house for you! And what poor Edith in heaven thinks of it—you that had the sweetest wife that ever—and disgracing her memory——"

Pemberton pushed the table away from him. "Never saw much good in Edith, did you? Till she was dead and you got a good living off me. Listen—if I ever see you again, you're to keep your tongue off her name—tell your sister, too, so she'll know beforehand."

"I'm glad to go, Pemberton," she said venomously. "To get out of the house of a low-life. That a decent woman'd have to see her sister's husband sunk in iniquity with a hussy like—like that slut Marian Warren. If ever a man killed his wife——"

"The Bingham always made a good thing of the Abbeys, didn't they?" he said.

He left her calling down the wrath of her strange god on all the Abbeys and especially on him. His thoughts moved out to Blaine, where Amos and Sam Bingham ran the farm of Jim Abbey, sullenly, under Jim's curses that followed them while Jim could not. The Bingham sisters kept that house, too, and went out from it to marry, and returned to it with husbands

and children that must be fed on the Abbey goods. Flies clustering! Sam and Amos would find a way to make off with the farm when Jim died, no doubt. Too cowardly to face the cripple while he lived, they would despoil his corpse. Pemberton gave a damn what happened when the old man died! He wouldn't touch a finger to the soil; the rocks for him. But the Binghams—flies, cheese-mites, maggots. He thought briefly of Herman Kleinfeld, who, also, had fed on Jim's substance. Herman had done some staring at Pemberton. Pemberton hoped he would try. . . .

Extraordinary crashes and vast dust in the sheds, which continued over many hours, at last drew John Gale out to see what was on foot. A fog of gray-green dust set him to coughing as he entered the doorway, and stench choked his lungs. Through the gloom he could see heaps of wreckage, Pemberton and a laboratory worker heaping more rubbish on them, and the boy Gordon racing round the room in an ecstasy of destruction.

Pemberton stood before him, brandishing a crowbar. "Here's one more Abbey Process following ten others crosslots to hell," he roared. "Here, son," he grabbed the racing Gordon by one shoulder, spun him round, and heaped his arms with glass beakers which were spotted blue and carmine and purple. "You take these out and bust 'em on a stone. If that don't make a pretty noise, come back and tell your Dad."

The boy loped out and began to hurl the beakers against the shed, shrieking his delight. "But what?" Gale demanded.

Pemberton braced his crowbar on the floor and

squatted against it. "You're an author," he said. "You know there's a hell of a difference in words. Ask Tom Whitaker if the difference between debit and credit don't give him diarrhea. Well, John, it took a long time to show me the difference between sulphate and sulphide. It don't sound like much difference at that, not as much as, say, between whore and Mrs. Warren—and Windsor don't allow you could slip a shadow between them. But the hell of it is, you can dissolve this sulphate, John."

He was energized again. "That stink that makes you sniffle—that's sodium thiosulphate. Like a change?" With no effort, he rolled a twenty gallon carboy on to a drain. He roared, and crashed his crowbar through it. A sharper odor fought with the ammoniated dust. "That's ferrous chloride," Pemberton explained.

At once he leaped upon a scaffolding that bore intricate curves of pipe and tile-work, jammed the crowbar behind the thickest cluster, and beckoned the chemist to attack it from below. Gale saw the bar stand out stiff above the floor, saw Pemberton, yelling, leap out and catch it with both hands. Planks screamed, brick-work banged thunderously, half the laboratory rose up and fell to the floor. Pemberton emerged through plaster and grime.

"It's a big day for Gordon," he said.

Gale pulled him out to the clean frost of February. "Can you explain what's happening?" he asked mildly.

"One more process up the flue." Pemberton's eyes snapped through their rings of grime. "Twenty-seven months of wet-extraction, John. No go. I'm building an oven. If I can't wash her out, then maybe I can broil her out."

Twenty-seven months. It was more than half the time that Gale had spent on the book that would need only another year. What, he wondered, what if he were called on to rip up half those agonizingly created pages? Pemberton's eyes were bright, his pulse was strong, he was as vivid as a spark across a gap—energy tireless and immortal! Gale was parsimonious of labor and hoarded his own energy like a miser. To waste so much work—he groaned. It was the jealous gods. They gave life niggardly—and asked it back fourfold.

"What's pleasant about a loss?" he growled. "When you still can't make copper?"

"Listen, John." Gordon passing on the run, Pemberton seized him and passed him rapidly up over his shoulders and down between his legs, tossed him from one arm to the other, and released him in full stride. "I can make copper more ways than I can cuss out my old man. I can make it every way but cheap. Well, there's time for that. . . . Next May, I'm going up in the hills again and play I've found a silver mine. Want to come, John?"

He drifted back toward the shed where he was casually destroying two years of effort. "Write me a book about damn fools, will you, John? Three years ago I almost sold an interest to Herman. That's one. He almost bought it, but he didn't. That's two."

With the Spring, Windsor's past woke again, and time flowed backward to a glory the city had not seen since men were small boys. All Winter long there had been rumors that one of Pemberton Abbey's desert rats had found gold somewhere back in the hills. The old dreams came back and wherever there was talk—along the railroad, in switchmen's shanties, at the six o'clock assemblies in saloons—men remembered Oro Fino, or Florence, or the Black Hills. Tales of the old bonanzas passed about. One could look up at the snow-cruisted peaks and remember that they had given up unimaginable wealth before this and might again. But Pemberton would say nothing of his find, and stayed on in Windsor, and no word came.

Then, before the passes were clear, the rumors burst into flame. Gold! Such gold as no one had ever heard of. It was Sutter's Creek—American River—Oro Fino and Sublett and Helena—a thousand times over. Abbey had found a virgin lode. He had bored through a mountainside to a mile deep vein that ran fifty thousand to the ton. The infallible fingers that had gutted the Sunrise Queen had worked a new and more breathless miracle. But where was it? Straight north, or northwest, or west? Some said it was up Grouse Creek way, some had secret information that it was in the badlands of the Rio Verde, others had heard from the desert rat himself that it was beneath the well-prospected San Pete drifts.

"You poor damn idiots," he told a crowd of engineers that had besieged him in the bank, as he had told many others before them. "It ain't gold and it ain't worth going to see. It's a silver mine—hundred and twenty miles northwest—right up Piegan Canyon where it heads off the Whitetail. I've been running a tunnel there for two years, for anybody to see that wanted to, and Jeff Farrand has been there for months. Go take a look."

But Pemberton had been known to lie before this, and any man who has struck pay-dirt is thrice a liar. Already dozens had hurried out to buck the snows and find his secret. Others were buying what the hardware stores had of desert-going equipment. Mules and burros clanked along Harney Street, as they had done thirty years ago. Word had gone out over the wires, and now the restless and the hungry and the hard-boiled began to arrive in a growing flood.

Gale went among them overjoyed. Here was history brought back and re-enacted for his convenience. . . . A dozen mules slipped in single file through the gates of a feed-yard. Spring sunset was orange and purple through the dust they raised, and piratically bearded men under broad hats tramped beside them. There were barrels and water-bags slung across those mules, and above their jingling trot a driver cursed lazily and long. In the feed-yard, a forge blazed against the sunset and threw shadows across more leather-clad men kneeling beside bed-rolls and methodically rolling their hardware into packs. One kicked a mule's belly with great emotion, and the mule sang. A match, deep in the sheds, showed eyes excited for the trek to come. Gale smiled. This was the spectacle, the picture: this fever and bustle, these men

kicking their mules into the rush, this lance-point intolerable beauty of peaks and Spring light.

"Let's move out," Pemberton said, the next day. "Do you want any of my horses? Can you leave tomorrow?"

They plunged into the hills, where Spring was a week later with every thousand feet they climbed. They were alone, three horses and two men, in a loveliness that tore at Gale's heart. It was some lost country of illusion, some land of Hyperboreans, of Atlanteans, a land where man's innocence preserved to him a splendor that was not meant for his frail senses. Cloud shadows were hazily mauve and purple on widespread basins. Roses were matted thick in mile-long clumps. Mountainsides of poplar and aspen and elder swayed in separate strata of winds. The eye moved on, hungry, constrained, carried outward and upward to the sun. Gale knew what it was to be given life more abundantly: it was to look upon a high mountain.

At night Pemberton picketed horses, laid out spruce tips for beds, and cooked a meal beside some snow-swollen stream. Gale, always exhausted, watched the line of violet shadow climb the eastern peaks, watched the cottonwoods dissolve grayly into the dark, watched the fire catch its mirror in roaring water—and always, watched Pemberton. The West, whatever it was, had given him a friend. Never on earth, he would have thought, could there be such naked power, such irresistible desire. For what? Gale stared into the fire. He came to that question in the end. Futile and weak and cowardly, all things in the West but Pemberton—and Pemberton—was he not, for all his doing his own will under heaven, driven blindly into some contrivance of the gods? The fire that lay so rosily on the cleft

between his brows—was it lighting a face that had looked too nakedly, too contemptuously, on doom? But the doomed face looked up at Gale, grinning.

"We'll beat the stampede into Whitetail Canyon," Pemberton said.

"Then we *are* going there?"

"Always were. So are they—they'll find out." Pemberton set out bacon and potatoes and beans. "If there was metal worth going after—wouldn't I have had it long ago? But try and tell a fool!"

"It was the Pioneer for a day, whatever happens. I've seen the Conquering, and the Ruthless, and the Indomitable. . . . A gold-rush—in my middle years!"

"Yeh, and it'll play true to form for they'll be stung when they get there. There's not an inch in Piegan that don't belong to me."

Pemberton laughed. Gale pictured an army of gold-frenzied amateurs arriving at their ultimate destination, after following every blind lead in five hundred miles, and finding Pemberton's claims nailed fast to every inch—with, for all he knew, a typically Pembertonian battalion of thugs to keep them off. That was the kind of joke Pemberton laughed at.

"There's something diabolical in your efficiency, Pemberton."

"Mordecai Krug'll be there by the time we are, goin' up the desert instead of through the hills. I'm going to sell him the Piegan, you know."

"Not altogether for his purposes, you mean?"

"Oh, he'll make money. Mordecai won't buy, unless." Pemberton snorted again. "He's had men goin' over it all Winter—you couldn't spit in it with-

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out them down on their knees to take a sample. Second time we've done business, you know."

Gale looked at him steadily. "Why sell it?"

"I'm not interested in silver. . . . You wait, John."

They moved on up dwindling streams, over barer divides toward the rimless frontier where mountains and desert blended. The stench of sage was in their nostrils; hooves flung up corrosive dust to blue the cracks that sharp winds cut into their lips; all greens sobered to the hopeless drab of greasewood. Veils drew away from the sun; mirrors leaped out from red and yellow cliffs; and the eye was tortured, rolling constantly away from a light it could not endure. Dawn roused them to bitter cold but soon they were grilling in dry fire while their hearts drummed and their lungs groped for the thin air of passes that lay always still higher above them. Day after day, sunset after sunset, the reek of sage-smoke pungent at twilight.

It became, for Gale, a journey into eternity. He seemed to be marching on into sun and wind only for stubbornness, only because Pemberton must march on into them throughout his life, never knowing whose will sent him on, never so much as seeing what he was sent for, and never, never by any mercy, destined to achieve it. They came down into Piegan from above—from the topmost ruin of a barren world where the eye ran out into inconceivable distances and desolation. There was no color of tree or rock in Piegan, only dirt of no distinction at all. The slopes were grimy—they hardly had the grace of sage—and all the twist and thrust of cliffs was mean. There were, however, a huddle of sheds, piles of broken rock, rods of piping,

and the gape of a timbered hole yawning from the mountainside.

"That's the Piegan Condor mine, John," Pemberton said.

Jeff Farrand lolled out to meet them, freckled, weatherstained, pessimistic. "Mob of fire-eaters hereabouts, Pemberton." He waved a long arm down the slopes indicating canvas shelters, undone packs, a general movement of unidentified men. "Can't tell 'em there ain't no ore here only what's under your name. Must be a hundred a-ready humpin' their tails at the roots of every sagebrush within rifle-shot."

"Run them out," Pemberton said. "Krug here?"

"Must have anyways eight pairs of glasses lookin' at you right now. He's been over this mine of ourn with a hand-glass and a saddle-brush. He's had more ore blasted out in five days than my gang could unloose in a month."

"He figures we shot silver into it with a ten-gauge. He doesn't aim to be bit by me twice. Let him, Jeff. He'll buy."

In due time Gale saw the chunky, misshapen Krug walk and talk like an ordinary man, a frontier-myth of might and terror given a body long enough to do whatever he was called upon to do under Pemberton's star. The famous body-guard clanked with him wherever he went, stood and sat down with him, did sentry-go at every door he entered and every window that looked in upon him. Almost legendary now, Krug seemed to Gale hellridden by the fear of death, and his thugs clustered round him when Pemberton was about. . . . After some days, he agreed to Pemberton's price, made arrangements for banks and lawyers, and rode down Piegan toward the Whitetail

and the desert beyond, toward railroads and his Denver palace and the aberrant pastimes that caused the faint giggle men's voices carried with his name.

"Krug knows silver, anyway," Pemberton said. "He'll spend a lot on this, and it'll cost so much to get silver out of it that Krug won't make more than a whisper on any ounce. Only—Krug makes so much silver everywhere, this helping, he can buy a State or two on his profits. . . . See him look at me?" Pemberton stopped in the trail he was following. "There's a man. He hates me for the only one that ever took a trick from him. But he wants this mine. He keeps hands off his feelings and lets his good sense run his mind. It's a man—that don't stand in his own way for the sake of cutting a throat. If my old man had—but hell!"

He turned back to the trail. He was taking Gale and Farrand farther up the canyon, on some errand not yet clear. Gale played hopelessly with the words in his mind, turning over and over the new energies Pemberton had displayed to him these last days. The purchase price of the Piegan Condor had at least quadrupled Pemberton's wealth. Gale could see Whitaker shuddering at the size of it when word reached him among his ledgers. Yet Pemberton did not so much as glance over his shoulder at it. It was an expected, an inevitable thing. This was a means he was utilizing. It was what he had planned, what he had brought to be on his way toward something else, something shining ahead of him and still to be.

"Pemberton," Gale asked suddenly, "how much did you pay the desert-rat who found this vein?"

"Found it? John, I've known for years there was silver and copper here. All I had to do was pay a

man to find the center. Oh, it was that old rot-gut, Steve Gill. I carried him for years. When I made sure he'd found something here, I made the mistake of giving him a thousand dollars all at once—ought to have bought him another barrel of beans. Steve went down to Windsor and drunk himself to death in one of Belle Paris's crib-houses before he half spent it. One of Belle's girls probably tucked close to five hundred of my dollars under her garter. Why?"

Gale grunted. "What corner of limbo are we out for?"

"You'll see." They plodded upward in single file, round enormous boulders, under overhanging cliffs. Pemberton added later—"Krug's happy. He bought the Condor for less than he knows it's worth. He figures I don't know silver—and I don't. But he don't know he's going to build my railroad for me." His head went back in one of those laughs that meant Pemberton had found men singularly easy in his hands. Jeff Farrand grinned at him—his clouded eyes roaming out from his employer to the contours of the peaks. Contours that reached his mind in an orderly rhythm of gradients to be resolved in sums and transit-shots. Jeff lived engineering miracles, and his thoughts were a continuous epic of trestle-work thrown over impassable gulfs.

They came round a bend and stood on the brink of spectacle. Ahead of them, Piegan widened and flattened out, a level reach of dust and cactus and starved greasewood. A wind that had crossed fire lifted reddish dust into whorls. The intolerable light assailed their narrowed eyes. The distance was blinding rock where Piegan forked in a wide angle and led off two ways. Between the forks, around them, behind them,

and above them, a single mountain heaved itself up and seemed to lean forward like an overbalanced world. In all that mass hardly an armful of shrubbery had found root. It stood naked in its own immensity, under the borax-sky, incandescent rusty pink—heat tangible, light apprehensible—a mountain that oppressed the nerves with a power quite beyond good or evil but menacing to the very identity of men. You seemed, in its presence, to become only a vapor, only light-tortured dust.

They had stopped where the vista rushed upon them at the turning. Gale felt himself shrink away. Mountains and their distances had all too often parched his heart even while they lifted it up. He felt giddy and mean. He saw Farrand look about him apprehensively, as though he heard a rattler, and seem to grow smaller than himself. But what whipped his faculties awake again was Pemberton—who had been caught up with a hard bit. Pemberton seemed to yearn upward. If fire, the living element, could add more fire and become a soul—then Pemberton had been made more Pemberton before Gale's eyes.

Gale's mind reached after significances that slipped away from him. This, for the moment, was the unalloyed Abbey, the pure essence, desire and will. Gale was straining for understanding. He saw Jim Abbey at the moment when the West burst upon him. From the recesses of Gale's soul came a shudder: this was the transubstantiation of Pemberton Abbey, the bread made flesh—and he did not understand why.

Quite casually Pemberton leaned back into the cooler shadow of the cliff they had come around. But when he spoke there was left to his voice a slight vestige of his inspiration. Gale was cold with the

realization that these not-understood energies could rise so terribly underneath.

"That's it," Pemberton said. "Oh, it's not worth a damn, John. Three-four-five per cent at its best—tenth of a per cent at its worst. A copper man would howl you out of his house—bust an artery laughing at it. Yeh. . . . And it could buy out the government at Washington."

He rattled a handful of gravel in his pocket and was silent, looking morosely at the nude cliffs in the sun. Then, "Oh my God, John," he said, "my old man spent his life grubbin' sagebrush in Grouse Creek Basin."

Pemberton, back in Windsor, stopped Ashley Sprague, his attorney, on the street. "Got that last patent-claim worked out yet?"

"I've got it in shape, Mr. Abbey. Any time."

"I'll be round tonight, then. Say eight o'clock."

Sprague looked hastily away from him. "Can't you come to the office, Mr. Abbey?"

Pemberton noticed something hasty in Ashley's voice. He looked at him. "Why should I?"

"It's hard to do business at the house—women folks, children. I never know when there's going to be a sewing circle. Or maybe I could come to your house." He was just too eager.

"My boy goes to sleep. I don't want him woke. I'll be round at eight."

"Won't tomorrow do—at my office?" And now Ashley Sprague was quite openly a worried man.

Pemberton looked at him through level eyes, behind which he was seeing the tears, the utter distraction,

of Marian Warren some months ago. There had been talk of guns and death. There had been much talk of love and honor. But principally there had been, for him, a barrenness that stayed even his willingness to feel disgust.

He grinned. "You mean you need to be where your law books are?"

"Yes, of course. A lawyer away from his library—why, Mr. Abbey, I wouldn't trust my mind twenty feet from those books. You'd as soon see a doctor go without his—his thermometer."

"Yeh? I'd say the lawyer who needs books for patent-law—three months after he's worked out the law—don't lead a man to take much stock in him."

"Pemberton—Mr. Abbey—I can't work at home. You don't know—you can't realize. The women—distract me."

"I realize I want a lawyer who runs his own house. I want a lawyer who meets me where I say. I can't be bothered, Sprague—and there's plenty lawyers left on earth."

"Oh for God's sake come—come at eight—come at midnight. I don't care when you come or what you—what you want."

"Don't bawl," Pemberton said. "I'll come at eight. And don't let your sister-in-law run your business with me." He looked tranquilly into Ashley's eyes, not hoping to see resentment. "Don't let your sister-in-law run you," he repeated. "At eight. Is that right?"

"Eight o'clock," Ashley threw the words over his shoulder as he walked, very rapidly, away. Pemberton could see his shoulders trembling. He would almost have liked Sprague if he could have drawn fight from him. How much would they stand, these Wind-

sorites? How much could a man heap on them? He had never found a limit. . . . His thoughts flashed back ten years to a bar in Cripple Creek, to a man as huge as a Percheron, drunk, regal, and arrogant, leaning toward another man no less chiseled out of granite. There was liquor and lust and battle in that bar—and the man who leaned forward with his arms half circled like a gorilla's, was shouting, "Ask your sister whose pants hang on her bed when her man ain't home!" There was a killing that night in Cripple Creek—but those were men, and there would be no killing in Windsor.

If they'd fight, if they'd straighten up their backs! Must he bring even a lawyer to Windsor? He longed for Henry Clay Bryce, who was a man. But Bryce, just then, was turning the grape and canister of his oratory on one Mark Hanna.

But there was no doubt that he must bring a bank. He had an idea that bringing outside money to Windsor would pinch a few fingers. And he'd known for some time that it must be brought.

"I've got to have fifty thousand credit next week," he had quite casually said while both Kleinfeld and Whitaker were with him, in one of those strange, mutually suspicious and resentful consultations they had from time to time.

He saw Whitaker's face blanch with the apprehension it wore whenever anyone spoke of large sums—a look not so much acquisitively furtive as it was puzzled, diseased, as though Tom's identity had darkened with an indefinable but overwhelming fear. Whitaker said nothing—and Pemberton understood that nowadays Will Cartright had to take the initiative whenever the Windsor National made a loan—and Herman, too,

kept silent. But the next day Herman hailed him on the street, bore him into privacy in the First National and recalled the conversation.

"Pemberton, you will learn not to ask me for money when Tom is there. It is not good business to ask two bankers at once. The money, yes, that you can have, any time——"

"I'd ought to. I've assets enough in your vaults—and Tom's, too, to back up a——"

"There is no question of the money. But it isn't good business—me and Tom, two bankers, Pemberton, two different bankers. We must try to keep our secrets apart from each other."

Herman spoke gloomily of money. The good times we had been promised, somehow they didn't come. And the State was Populist—that damned Bryce in the Senate kept the whole State just one inch from bankruptcy all the time. "The money, Pemberton, you can have at call. Only we must cost you one-fourth percent more than you have paid——"

"No," said Pemberton. He stood up, his hat slouched forward over his face. "No, Herman. You do your gouging where they'll let you. Nobody gouges me."

"You won't get less rate from Tom," Herman said happily.

"I guess not. It would take two of you to frame something before one of you had the guts to try it."

He pushed Herman back into his rotary chair—negligently, with one finger. "All the same, Herman, you don't get it."

"Now listen, Pemberton, you are a fool, oh, a—an ass—if you sell assets all because of one little sheeny

fourth percent—and if you don't where will you get, God help me, fifty thousand dollars?"

Pemberton said, reflectively, "I don't know that it's your business, Herman—but I've got an idea it's your worry."

He went out wondering how far east it was wisest to go for liquid capital.

. . . Down on Fifth Street—now Twenty-fifth, for the sake of real-estate—on the way to the depot, Belle Paris, known to Windsor as Madam Paris, had begun commerce twenty years ago, as a ministrant to Windsor's affections. A girl who had an eye for a good thing, and foresaw the day when the exquisite laces the U. P. brought overland would not suffice her for support. Now, a city ordinance having decreed that her kind should be readily available in segregation, she not only controlled most of the houses of the trade, but had extensive business dealings more legitimate before the law. Madam Paris did a good business in short-time loans, in real-estate, and in the cattle auctions along the railroad. Her eye for a good thing served her well, for the Windsor business man amiably defrauded her when he could, secure in the favor a married householder would enjoy in court. They robbed her when they could and abused her when they could not. Madam Paris, rounding into middle age, increased her bank balances, ran her houses according to the law, and filed her tongue to a keen point.

Her landlord was Herman Kleinfeld—no one else would have foreseen that the segregating ordinance would ensure pleasing rents from a double row of shacks. And Herman, growing older, had found no

reason to deny himself what pleasures wealth might assure him in his age. He was the most economical client the girls of Madam Paris had ever had. But orderly, always orderly and methodical. Herman's time was taken up with business matters. And he collected his rents in person, in the evening.

One night someone threw a cigar into the excelsior that had wrapped a brandy-bottle and soon a crowd followed the clanging hose-cart into the alley behind lower Twenty-fifth where excited girls, with ball-gowns hardly concealed by decent capes, hauled furniture into the open, and screamed and gathered into defiant groups. It was a jovial crowd. Only one crib burned, but that one burned uproariously, and the virtuous could not often look upon sin arrayed for business. They jammed Twenty-fifth so tight that the Kleinfeld mule-cars were held up. They charged up the alley to the tips of the spurting nozzles. They climbed to all the neighboring roofs.

A reporter from the Windsor Evening Record dodged here and there, wherever there was a new angle to observe the flames or another celebrity to be greeted. On the edge of the semicircle nearest the flames he saw the greatest celebrity, his employer, the owner of his paper. The good man was watching the fire and his face had all the agony of a man who sees greenbacks thrown into the stove.

The reporter approached him. "Mr. Kleinfeld," he said, "you needn't have come away in such a hurry. Aren't your buildings insured? Shall I send someone home for your hat and coat?"

Herman seized him with as much strength as remained to flabby arms that had not run a log these thirty years. "Will you shut up, you damn dumb

fool?" Herman whispered venomously. "Do you hear! Shut up and lie down and dig a hole. They are inside!"

Word traveled in Windsor. Street corners and saloons and livery barns had their laughter. There were grins when Herman was about. And at once a rash broke out upon the Record, which discovered that the segregated district was an offense in Windsor and must be destroyed. Pulpits applauded. Madam Paris, who was already heroine to half the folk-tales of the city, was discussed even at the tables of the elect.

Madam Paris hung in the windows of a store-building on Harney Street, which she owned, three uncanceled checks, made out to her and signed by Herman Kleinfeld. They might have been almost anything—there was no doubt what they were taken for. Laughter boomed up Harney Street and blew through the saloons. There was conversation even in the chaste homes where starched and corseted wives, who pretended that they had conceived their children during sleep, had never before admitted knowledge of Belle Paris's name.

Thereafter, Herman going quite berserk, the banks called Belle's loans, foreclosed what mortgages they could, and cancelled their deals with her. The profits of Venus, unofficially doing their part in Windsor's growth, were threatened. Madam Paris had nerve—and she had brains. She fought back. And presently she appeared in the office of the only business man in Windsor who had never tried sharp practices on her.

"Mr. Abbey," she said, "can you let me have five thousand for a month? Today?"

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Pemberton held out a chair for her. "Herman actin' up?"

"Herman's gone off his head."

"Can you stand up?"

"I can if I can get five thousand ror a month. But my God, Mr. Abbey, you'd think I was asking for the throne of grace."

"No private loan-shark dares let you have it, huh? First National won't, for that's where the big boss lives. Nobody'll take a mortgage off your hands while Herman's round. Well, there's Tom Whitaker's Windsor National, Belle."

"I couldn't get a cent from them."

"Yes, you could."

He saw that her eyes did not move. The toe of her bronze boot, so much more fashionable than any the young Kleinfelds allowed their wives, did not begin to swing. She answered him straight—that was the way he liked a man to talk, and no man in Windsor talked that way. "Well, I could, then. But I'm not asking for it there. I'm fighting this Dutch bastard man to man. I'm asking you for it, Mr. Abbey. One-and-a-half percent a month—that's good money."

"You needn't talk interest to me. I'd pay you wages to beat Herman."

Pemberton fished a check-book from his desk. "Will five do it?"

"God knows I could use eight. If I had ten I could cover every cent I've got."

He wrote the check for fifteen thousand, signed it, blotted it. "As long as you want it, Belle, and come back when you want more."

She looked at it and nodded calmly, with more dignity, he thought, than any of the Warrens. Putting

it away, she paused. "Listen, Mr. Abbey, you take this back and go get me the cash. You don't want a check going through with my name on it. First National, too."

"You cash that check, Belle, and then go tell Herman where you got the cash."

The austere procuress, who was really, he reflected, much more virtuous-looking than any Windsor matron, offered him a man's handclasp. "Thanks, Mr. Abbey. I'll singe that Dutchman, thanks to you."

"Belle," he said, as she was going. "Were those checks what they looked like?"

"Did you ever know Herman to pay cash for what he could draw a month's interest on? Sure they were—three months' bills. Herman runs a charge account at my parlor house."

"Pemberton," Gale said, "how long since a respectable Windsor matron opened her house to you?"

"Still do any time some husband has to do business with me."

"But otherwise?"

"They scare kids with me."

Gale surmised that all doors had been closed since the affair of Marian Warren, about which he was supposed to know nothing. He was supposed, too, to know no more about the women who had from time to time succeeded her. Pemberton remained a buccaneer, and such piracies as he made among the women of Windsor only paralleled his offences among the men. He was now quite feral, and the good safe folk of the city were leagued against him.

"I go where I want, John. Why?"

"Only, they're such a clan, such a tribe. It wasn't chance that set me studying them first among the Indians. The Goisutes and the Windsorites! Indians that live in brush huts when they have huts, and eat grasshoppers and sunflower seeds. And whites who fear every manner of distinction."

Gale mused, pleased by his parallel. The Goisutes, the Diggers, were the most squalid among Indians. To duplicate their wretchedness, one must go to the Bushmen of Australia or to the pitifuls whose skulls were in the deepest strata of the caves. They hid themselves naked in the hills, without fire or breech-

clouds or arrowheads, and white men or superior Indians saw them only far off, frantically stampeding away from the menace of better men. When he thought of Pemberton, the clan of Windsor seemed Diggers. They feared this Abbey much as the naked Diggers feared better men who could clothe themselves with skins and build fires against the storm.

"Yeh. I guess you'd call 'em a clan, *you* would anyway. A Sprague marries a Warren and a Holbrook marries a McNamara, and they all marry Kleinfelds. Keep it in the family—grab on to a penny and don't let it get into anybody's pocket but ours. Pa can have the street-car system but Uncle Bill has got to run the sewers. You make gas and I'll make current, and we'll both get what boodle we can from the mayor and the council. And oh my God, John, how scared! Out in a ring with their arms round each other, scared blue it's going to thunder. What are they worth—with their knees knockin' and their bowels crawlin'? What kind of men are they?"

"Diggers," Gale insisted, "a taboo is something you're afraid of." He smiled. "My unsexed ancestors were afraid of the flesh and tabooed it. The little of Windsor are afraid of power, and taboo you."

Pemberton grinned. "Old Herman's had a dog's life for a year. He brought his kids up in a chicken coop, you know, and the oldest of 'em looked on when Herman was begettin' the youngest. He never spent a dime that didn't gripe him like sour apple pie. He's cussed old Anna all her life and she's damn well knuckled under to what he said. Well, she's had her chance since Belle Paris held those checks back and hung 'em up in a window. I guess Herman's been hagg-ridden. All Anna wants is a new house, and she's been

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lammin' those checks at Herman ever since they showed up."

He laughed. "She'll get it, too. But the sons' wives won't get what they're after. They've gone genteel, you know—havin' a rich Pa-in-law. So they figure it ain't elegant to be called Kleinfeld. Every time Herman sees one of 'em, she blats out about callin' themselves Littlefield. Frank's wife—he's the oldest—she even started callin' herself Mrs. Littlefield. But the old man saw one of her checks goin' through the First National and sent the sheriff up to give her fits for bad checks. Herman figures he was born Kleinfeld and if it ain't genteel, anyways there's money in it."

Pemberton smoked tranquilly. "I haven't heard the last of Herman. He won't tackle me head on, but he'll try to slip a knife into me on the run sometime. There ought to be fireworks."

The year had shaped toward Pemberton's will. Mordecai Krug, who was a director of the Union Pacific, had the railroad build a spur a hundred miles northward through the desert to where the Whitetail canyon opened through the peaks. From the mouth of the Whitetail Mordecai built a narrow-gauge road, that hung precariously from the cliffs, up to his silver mine, the Piegan Condor. At once an army of Pemberton's men marched up Piegan Canyon past the Condor, on up to Pemberton's mountain. There they began to lay foundations, and to block out enormous skeletons on the ground. Gale could tell, as the fissure between Pemberton's eyebrows deepened, that some

imperceptible corner had been turned in the direction of his plan.

And now suddenly there was a third bank in Windsor, the Porphyry State. It had sprouted from an innocent mortgage company that had been Pember-ton's share of the Great Western division, and he had brought the Allisons west from Omaha to make it into a bank. The Allisons were twin brothers whose gentility was a marvel in Windsor. They had inherited wealth, not made it, and that was far more aristocratic than anything in Windsor. They were Episcopalians, and the city had not developed a caste higher than Presbyterians, who outranked Methodists, who in turn were finer stuff than Baptists. They were reserved and polite by nature, and they had personal calling cards—which in Windsor had never been used except by a few women. They dressed in brown tweeds and wore burnsides and sometimes carried canes. They went out to improve the tone of Windsor—to make it a more comfortable place for gentlemen. They rode horseback on Sundays, posting above English saddles and wearing patent leather boots. They shot clay pigeons over traps.

The Allisons were genteel and their women were elegant. The brothers bought houses near the river. The wife of Hobart set out croquet and awnings on her lawn and invited the clan to tea. The wife of Milnor put up targets for archery and served punches made from wines. Elizabeth Allison, the young sister of the twins, had the first dogcart ever seen in Windsor and drove her horses in the first tandem. She rode a bicycle, too, and if she had not been an Episcopalian must surely have been a hussy—for she wore much narrower bloomers than the most daring daughter of

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the clan had essayed, and she seemed indifferent when the wind sometimes raised them to her knee.

Th twins were sharp bankers, trained in a stiffer competition than Windsor had ever seen. They had survived a brush with Mordecai Krug. And they became partners of Pemberton Abbey, whom no Windsor wife would receive in her house.

Pemberton was depressed by Whitaker's parlor. Tom's wife was too virtuous to appear before the seducer of women, and Tom was always timorous in the presence of Pemberton. The parlor—Tom's wife could not call it a drawing room—was hung with too many oil paintings of prize bulls, too much elegant beadwork, too many starched curtains. Without knowing why, Pemberton preferred the chastity of Gale's house. But he enjoyed terrifying Tom.

"God! it's hot," he said, and threw open a window that overlooked snow-covered branches. "Well, is Herman coming, or ain't he?"

"It's not my fault if he's late," Tom protested. "Telephone him and find out."

"Herman pay for a telephone in his house? Not while he's got grandsons to run errands. If he could fix up a saw-off with the telephone company, maybe he'd have one."

Whitaker chewed at his cigar. There was something awed and apprehensive in his eyes—had been increasingly as his years and his money piled up, and particularly Pemberton Abbey was to be feared. There had been no peace of mind or money since the second Abbey came of age.

"Once more," he said, as persuasively as he could,

"there's no need to fight, Pemberton. It will be easier all around if you throw in with us. Fight, fight, fight—have we got to be at each other's throats?"

"There's no need to pray for guts enough to cut my throat—not while there's room between my ribs for a knife."

Pemberton looked at the stout elegance, appraising it, estimating the flabbiness that rolled beneath the elegant broadcloth and finicky linen. "You and Herman together, about a ton of pork," he remarked dispassionately. "You stick to a knife, Tom, like you always did. I heard once you'd killed your man. I heard he caught an ace in your cuff, too. I heard you even had guts enough, once, to step out with a dance-hall girl. I never believed it."

Tom had gone first red, then white. But Herman Kleinfeld was pulling at the bell. He came in swinging his arms, puffing, beating his hands against his chest. He handed Tom a plaid ulster he had bought ten years before.

"Gott, you live a mile from my car-line. You must move back nearer the city again, Tom."

"You didn't bring a horse?"

"A horse? It is six below freezing, Tom. It is not good business to give a horse a bronchitis. You please put down that window, Tom—would you poison us with night air? Now, Pemberton, you can merge your bank with mine or you can merge it with Tom's, but there is no business in Windsor for three banks. You will lose us all money."

"Not all of us, Herman."

"Three banks—they will all go begging for each other's scraps."

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"I quit bragging when I was seven. It'd been six years, then, since a brag scared me."

Herman eased forward to the end of his chair, so that his paunch jiggled in space. He raised a pudgy forefinger even with the gold horseshoe that joined his watch to his lapel. "You have been lucky, Pemberton. Nobody has taken things away from you. Nobody has kicked you in the pants. Nobody, I noticed it from the first, ain't disposed to get mad at you. But this bank, that's something else a-ready."

Whitaker broke across the scolding. "I've told you there's money in it if we stick together."

"Yeh, who told you first?" Pemberton inquired. "Well, listen. I'm started now, and it's not your job. You stick to cussedness, Herman, and let Tom stick to first mortgages. Nobody's going to get hurt, if you do. My job's too big for you to see now, but if you ever do get it in your eye, just you remember it's mine, and act according. Nobody's got mad at me yet—you take care nobody does."

"You can spend your money making nonsense at Whitetail, Pemberton—that ain't our business. Only, I tell you straight, get out of banking in Windsor or you'll get hurt."

Whitaker raised his hands toward the ceiling. "No bullying, Herman. Gentlemen, gentlemen, we mustn't be violent."

Pemberton laid affectionate hands on Kleinfeld's shoulders. "I'm started, Herman. Get that, I'm started. I need that bank. You haven't got head enough to understand how big my job is, and you haven't got guts enough to try it if you had. Only, I know you."

Pemberton swung to the far wall whence he could

see them both, fat gray men who had ridden the growth of Windsor to wealth and power. Beneath his amiability ran the loathing he had never been able to express. He wondered for a moment just why he despised them so. Was Gale right? Was there something in his blood that warred instinctively upon them? . . . Well, he had no time for that.

"Some day it'll hit you like a rock, that you've been too yellow to make money. You'll see then what you lost out on through bein' dumb. . . . Well, I know you. Don't you get in my way, then. Don't reach out a paw for my mine. Don't try to cut across behind me or my bank. If you do——." A spell held Tom's eyes on his hands. "It's leave me alone or it's fight me with every cent you've got. I don't say stay away. But if you come, come a-runnin' and bring every gun you've got in the cellar."

"We can talk some more," Whitaker broke in. "We're acting like fools. It doesn't need to end tonight. All we need is to talk it over."

"Talk hell! Tom. All the talk it needs is this—you keep out of my way. I'm getting something done, and if you or Herman or John Doe gets in my way—God help you."

"You was seven when you bragged, Pemberton?" Herman asked.

"If it's a brag, Herman, you go after my bank tomorrow. Listen, I don't see your way, I don't talk your way, I don't think your way. I've given up trying. All I say is, keep away."

Genteel tapping drew Tom to the door. He accepted a tray with fruit cake and glasses of wine. Herman smiled.

Herman gulped his wine and was chewing ener-

getically at a piece of cake when he said, "We heard your father once, Pemberton. He wouldn't play with us, neither."

"My old man hated thieves. I only hate petty thieves. . . . Your wife can come in, in a minute, Tom. I'm going. Maybe Mr. Littlefield will go, too."

Herman sprang up. "You can drive me in. Maybe we get there in time. I told my grandson to hitch up and come for me at eleven. Now he will not need to give that gray an extra mash."

Gale knew that Pemberton was not given to debauch. Save for the urge that took him, in intervals between fiendish labors, from woman to woman—save for this vagrancy, Pemberton was by nature an ascetic. He lived as sparsely as a puritan, as severely as an anchorite. There was no sin in him—only the fire kindled at hellfire that drove him.

Yet, as the Winter wore out, Pemberton's activities seemed to boil over and stop, and then Pemberton disappeared. Ever since the last of that flaunted affair with the Warren hussy, there had been swift trips to Denver. Between expeditions to the Whitetail, between consultations with the Allisons, between frenzies of ordering things done in the laboratories and at the mine and at the smelter-to-be. That meant another woman. But to disappear! Would he perhaps return with an occupant for the cottage, to displace Venice Bingham, who had just now displaced Madeline?

Many times Gale wondered why Beacon Hill did not rise in his blood and abhor this Westerner who

outraged his gods. It was, he must conclude, because Pemberton had slain all gods. Pemberton was the immortal West, the everlasting frontier. The frontier that had never been except in him.

Still he did not come back to Windsor, and the solemn Gordon reported Aunt Venny as saying that his father would kill himself in drink. Aunt Venny said he was in Denver. In Omaha. In San Francisco.

Then, hours past midnight, there was a beating on Gale's door. Servants stirred but Gale was before them, furious lest Hope should be waked. Flinging open the door, he saw Pemberton, who waved protests from his lips. Pemberton dragged him to his room, stood over him while he dressed, and flung a heavy coat about his shoulders. Outside, the best of Pemberton's horses was hitched to a light buggy. Its trotting was muffled in the muddy April streets. . . . Gaslight was wan on Pemberton's face at a corner. This was drunkenness, but such drunkenness as there had never been. Later, Gale remembered only that Pemberton talked and that the sky seemed somehow to be on fire.

. . . They had stopped in front of the rambling wooden house where Herman Kleinfeld lived, awaiting his new mansion on the hill, and Pemberton was talking about Herman.

"Got fat like a maggot on my old man's flesh. Him, John, the best in Windsor. Chills and fever—he makes me want to puke. I've never been at home here, John. The best of them, they're flies. See anything? do anything? worth anything? *Them?* Herman and Tom? Flies in a cut—laying mites to breed more flies. There's a thousand Kleinfelds now—God knows how many bastards. Him sleepin' now, fat in

his bed, with a Dutch nightcap on, dreamin' how he'll pinch a dollar off some fool tomorrow—or pinch some fat whore's leg. There ain't muck enough on earth so filthy Herman wouldn't push his nose into it to bring out a dime in his teeth. Nor there ain't a woman on two legs couldn't have him after her if she'd wiggle her tail."

The horse tugged at the reins. Pemberton held it still and stared at the house. "His gas on the corner. Will be till the mains wear out before Herman'll light the town with arcs. Stingy, blind, but oh my God, John, most of all stupid. He'd lick a penny off a dung heap—but he can't see a million two hours ahead."

Pemberton vaulted out of the buggy, handing the reins to Gale. He stooped. There was a crash that set the horse trembling, and the corner-light went out. But there was no stir within the house. "I may have to bust him wide open yet. Him and Tom, they own Windsor. They may get in my way. They'd like to, but they don't know how. They're scared, too. Let 'em hear a rustle and they run. If I could nerve 'em up to take a crack at me!"

Presently, they were driving on. "I'm done. I can't go 'em. Yellow? They'd turn the stomach of a hungry squaw. It's me against them till hell freezes or Windsor Creek runs up hill—till I've licked 'em stiff or they've knifed me from behind. Them and the whole damn city of Windsor, them and the whole damn State, them and the whole damn West. Men and women—women did you say? Crook a finger at any of them, and she'll take you into bed. But God! she'll drive you to suicide. Mongrel bitches and yellow curs."

The trotter was sawing at the reins. Pemberton yielded his wrist and they were off down the road in utter darkness. The buggy swayed and dipped. The horse, after a quarter-mile, took fright of so much speed and bolted out of its gait. Pemberton yelled and shouted in delight. Oaths crackled through the night. Mud slapped against their cheeks. One hub began to sing. Still Pemberton yelled, half risen from his seat. Gale saw that he was waving his hat. . . . The night split open and Gale rose straight into the air, his stomach wrenched with terror. But Pemberton had held him in, and had jerked the horse quiet. He leaped to its head and spoke to it soothingly.

"Only a shaft and one wheel, John," he said.

He led the horse out from the wreckage, tied it to a tree, and carefully blanketed it. From then on there was sheer nightmare and fantasy. They were walking up a creek sullen with April flood, among boulders that ran at them out of darkness, stumbling across dead branches, slipping into puddles that covered them with slime, falling headlong into brush or water. Some piston drove Pemberton on, some piston no less omnipotent for being invisible, and Gale must follow if he died. For it might be drink that hurled his friend through the night. Or it might be madness. Or perhaps the inspiration of God.

"My old man knew it," Pemberton said. "I've had to find it out. It's me against them and all hell, for ever. Till one of us is licked. There's none of their blood in me. It's blacksnake and rattler."

"You showed me," he announced, some time later. "Would I have read a book but for you? Whose books showed me one kind battling another for the earth? It's war and those that's fit—they get what

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they want. To hell with the rest. Club 'em down. Run 'em underfoot. Let the wolves eat 'em."

The terror of certain doom was cold in Gale's heart. That was the face of stone, the eyes no man might read. "Yes," he said, "but what if it's the world that says who's fit? What if the world can't stand for you, wasn't built for you, would be destroyed by you? What if it's the men who must be trampled down and the lice must live? What if the world was built for lice? What if it's the lice that are most fit?"

"Copper!" Pemberton shouted. "Copper! I tell you, copper!"

They had somehow reached the summit of a hill when the fingers of gray reached above the eastern peaks and Pemberton's demon found voice for what it meant. Down Windsor canyon crept a wind that had slept in snow. Gale's thin blood was like ice. No man could live a dozen lives in one night and meet day-break without a groan. His very soul whimpered for hot drink. But Pemberton, all his life, had withstood cold and exhaustion and desperation. Had he ever slept? Had he ever shuddered with the knowledge that mortal flesh could sustain his will no longer?

"I tell you copper, John," Pemberton intoned. "Fifteen months and I'll be turning out copper. Get that in your head. Right out of the hills and on out in the world. Nobody can ever make all the copper that's going to be needed. The whole damn world's going to be gasping for copper like you'd gasp for air in a bell-jar. Men'll tear their hair yellin' for more. They'll be robbin' each other for it. No city in the world's goin' to live one day without it. No mill's goin' to run ten minutes. All the railroad cars in the world, they'll be haulin' it night and day. It's got to

be had, the way blood's got to be had, or food, or women. No nation on earth can live in peace without it, or fight a war without. Every kid that's born—he's brought into the world with it, he lives with it every day of his life, and he's planted by it and with it and in it.

". . . The old wells, they're dryin' up, John. And me, I'm a new well. I'm sellin' copper, in fifteen months. Will they come to me, John? Will they come to me and beg? Steel, gold—hell, I've got copper. And my old man rackin' his life out to grow things in the soil, nursin' a cabbage. Him, an Abbey, grubbin' in the ground like a nigger, like a Polack—when there's copper in the rocks. . . .

"It'll eat up Windsor like a bull eats grass. Yah! It'll gobble up Tom. It'll gobble up Herman. God Almighty, John, it may gobble up me—but it'll damn sure gobble up Windsor. It's so big there won't be a child in Windsor that don't suck its milk by copper's lief. They won't own a foot of ground, or earn a cent, or buy a drink without copper says they can. Copper'll tell 'em when to die. Copper'll lie round 'em like the air they breathe. It's something new on earth. It's Windsor reaching out to Europe one day and Asia the next—and cutting its own bowels out like a Jap."

Pemberton grew less coherent. His voice coarsened. His head nodded dazedly on his shoulders.

"Yes, but for God's sake why?" Gale said, the words wrenched from the despair in his heart. "Why do you strip your flesh off in ribbons? Why do you impale yourself on hooks of fire?"

The words just carried through the film that was

settling over Pemberton's wits. He was stooped now, like a laborer just off a double shift.

"Christ! It's a new power in the world. No kid of mine or yours will have kids whose great grand-kids will live to see where it ends up. I don't know why, John. I wish I did. I went out to lick the pants off Herman. It's got past that. . . . I'm going to sleep. . . . Something stepped in, John. . . . Something's got me by the collar. Something's kickin' my pants—hard—and sayin', get on with copper, you worthless son of a bitch! What do you think I put you here for? To feel pretty or run your cheek across a woman's lips? Now, you low bastard, it says—get out and muck your nose in copper—start something and get it done."

The knotted hickory of Pemberton's arm went over Gale's shoulder. Pemberton's weight careened upon frail New England strength. . . . Stumbling and swearing, Gale got him home, five miles, before unconsciousness quite overwhelmed him. He was very drunk, those five miles, drunker than Gale had known a man could be, drunk enough to have lasted a captain of horse six months. He slept in Gale's house while the clocks told off two days.

The Abbey Process was achieved.

On Harney Street drums were summer thunder, and a crowd slid and bent under massed flags. Pemberton, at the curb, threw back his head and snorted. Let damn fools lick each others' sores! He watched the crowd melt at the edge where marching men bumped against it. Near at hand, a farmer's jumper and overalls pressed toward him.

"Hey, Pemberton——" Sam Bingham had the envy and smugness of his breed. "I told the old man I'd look you up today. He wants you should come out and see him."

"You too busy stealing his land to drive him in?"

"He's feelin' poorly, Pemberton. He don't get around much. He's upset about somethin'—*I* told him 'twouldn't do no good to ask you—but my Lord a body can't live around him till you do what he says. Will I tell him you'll be out?"

Pemberton considered. But the urgency of Jim's commands was evident. Sam shifted from one iron-tipped boot to the other. "God a-mighty, I don't dast go into the house——"

"I'll be out," Pemberton said.

. . . It was May Day. The valley at Blaine was odorous with new willows, fresh-turned earth, apple blossoms. You rode to the back door between walnuts and mulberries and chestnuts—grown taller than anyone could have remembered them. Jim Abbey sat in the dooryard. Sun was dazzling on the Indian rug

that wrapped his legs, and on the white shawl that Bingham hands had pinned round his shoulders.

Pemberton stopped short, rising on his toes. Could Jim Abbey have shrunk to such impotence? Could age so come upon an Abbey? He felt baffled, bewildered, futile. What could he say? What could he do? His hands—he could not interpose his hands.

“Father——” he said, “Sam said you wanted me. . . . Father.” In all his life he had never before spoken the word. It came but rustily from his lips.

Jim’s misshapen fingers were gripped fast to the chair. His thin hair, without a color that could be named, was somehow pathetic. He sat stiffly upright, but the effort drained his cheeks white. He looked on his son, who looked at him, sombrely, and for a space, while the creek sang, they found no words.

“Pemberton,” Jim said at last, hoarsely, from an apprehension almost tangible, “are you going to the war?”

“Hell, no!”

“I thought so.” The old man moved his head to spit over the arm of the chair.

“Plenty damn fools are. I’ll drive you in, if you want to see them. Whole town’s cheering them on. I’ll let out a yip or two myself, maybe, if enough bankrupts join up.”

Jim’s voice was hoarser still. “You get back to Windsor fast as that horse can gallop. You put your name on that roll tonight.”

“Me? Me sign up to let some ass that can’t blow his own nose tell me what to do? Let some——”

“Commission!”

“Yeh, the Governor’d make me a major, maybe. There’s colonels and generals, ain’t there, to tell me

where to go? Besides, me get out and lose time from my mine and maybe get shot—so's the Senate's cousins can make millions out of supplies? I'd be a fine fool to ride away from the Whitetail and spend my time bayonettin' Spigs to hell for the profit of somebody who buys cane-sugar. They don't take me in—I'm not a fool, standin' on the curb and yellin' my head off while the flag goes by and a New York stockbroker or a contractor runs his hands through my pockets."

"Listen!" Jim mastered his voice, and mastered the tremors that ran the length of his legs, to speak slowly. "I fought four years for my country. I was shot four times——"

"What did it get you?"

"We were licked, but I fought. That's done. That's settled. And if a son of mine stays home when his country's at war——"

"Makin' money for the insiders. My God, you're grown up. You don't swallow this stuff—beat back the oppressor, free the downtrodden, remember the Maine——"

"If God would give me strength to pull myself off to war, I'd go and shame you."

Pemberton was unmoved. "All I know is, there's them that let the insiders swindle them, and them that won't swallow the pap. Honor, hell—I'll believe in honor when I hear nobody's going to get rich from the war."

"I sit here. All I've done for years. I read the papers. I think. I've got time to think what it means to have a son that won't go to war when his country asks for him. An Abbey. A war going on and no Abbey in it. Men marching off to die and no Abbey with them—marching off to keep you fat and safe in

your own skin—Pemberton, I'm telling you to fall on your knees and ask God to forgive you. If the sun sets without you signing up—you get your name on that roll today."

Jim had half-risen from the rocker. He leaned forward, flinging out the rusted power of his will. He was only will—the will that through the years of his vigor had been stopped by no power in the West. No power but one. It had never conquered Pemberton's. He perceived that it could not now. He sank back into his chair, trembling, his effort lost. . . . Why were the fields of Velden in his eyes?

"May God damn your soul to the hell he keeps for cowards," he said.

"Cowards! I tell you——"

"*You* tell me? Tell me nothing. All your life you've been a curse set on me. Not one decency, not one honorable thing but you've tromped on. I brought you up to be an Abbey. You never were. You've been a blot on everything I dreamed of. The only one to live—and you disreputable, dishonorable, a coward. A liar, an adulterer, a murderer, and now a coward. Get away from me and let me breathe clean air."

"Why you old fraud!" Pemberton was shouting himself into a frenzy. "You sit there with a twisted leg on ground that's yours just because the thieves you live with are afraid of me. You call me names! What've you done? What's being an Abbey got you? Who ever said Jim Abbey without brayin' his head off in a laugh? Yeh, you walloped me with blacksnakes to make me honorable—till I was big enough——"

He stopped. Intolerable ice was closing on his heart. For Jim Abbey had slumped back, fumbling with the woman's shawl that covered him, and tears

were coursing down his cheeks. Tears whose bitter futility, on those shrunken cheeks, was not to be borne. That Jim Abbey should cry! That the old man——

“God’s name, Father, what are we rowing for?”

Pemberton found it in himself to draw the shawl back over those resisting shoulders, to fumble at caressing them with awkward gentleness. Tears still fell slowly from the old man’s eyes, but he said nothing, looking away across the valley he had destined for his son.

“We’ve always cussed each other out,” Pemberton said, from the agony of unfamiliar tenderness. “We’ve been apart too long. I shouldn’t have left you alone. You’re sick, you’re weak. And these damned grave-robbers here——”

He put an arm round the narrowed shoulders and raised Jim to his feet.

“We’ll go back to the house, father. You lie down and take it easy. I’ll have Venice fix a room for you and tomorrow I’ll drive out for you and take you home. You’re living with me, now, all the rest of your life. Damned ignorant fool I am—to leave you with these skunks.”

At the house he thumped pillows into what might be ease. Then he assailed all available Binghamms with such denunciation as their righteous poverty had never heard. Oaths whistled about them, dredged from all the mines of the West.

“One of you quiet by his door, till I come back,” he commanded, reaching an end. “Carry his newspapers to him, and his food—and not a growl out of you.” . . . He stood beside the bed where Jim lay back against the pillows, silent, humiliated, spent. “Take it easy, Father. I’ll have a place for you tomorrow and I’ll

be here by noon. No more crabbin' with the Bingham. No more quarreling between us. I'm taking you home."

"Are you going to join the army?"

"We won't quarrel about that. You'll see it my way. Only first, I'm taking you home."

Jim rose a little from the pillow, looked at him through eyes blurred with the same impotent tears, and feebly shook his head.

Late that night, Gordon was waked by unfamiliar sounds. He lay quiet in his room, looking at the lattice work the moon made coming through the window, on the wall. He heard a horse stamping outside, and the creak of the shafts. There were voices, too, hard to make out: Uncle Samuel, he thought, in low-voiced protest; his father, angry, terribly angry, then quieter. Gordon sat up, sensing something dreadful, alarmed in moonlight no longer friendly. Then his father stamped into the house, did something in his room, and cried, "All right, Sam, I'm coming." Gordon's fingers clenched in the blanket; he wanted to scream. His father hurried out. Some one spoke to the horse and the buggy rattled off.

At once Aunt Venny was in the room and was holding him to her. His neck was wet from her cheek. "Oh, Gordy, Gordy," she said, "your Grampa,—your poor Grampa, he's dead."

A quartette had gone about the house and grounds all evening. Just now they were on the lawn under

the drawing-room windows, with the corner gas-light brilliant on two mustaches and two Gibson-shaved lips.

It stood down on the corner 'neath the old lamp-light,
You could hear the congregation there on any summer's night,
There was Johnny Wilson, now a Senator,
Billy Flynn and Jimmy Glynn,
Oh, he was killed in war. . . .

Pemberton, arm in arm with John Gale, strolled past knots of elegant women, out toward the greater freedom of the veranda. In the doorway one of the Sprague wives laid hands on Gale.

"Oh, Mr. Gale, haven't you broken your vow? Out among we uncouth Westerners?" She was elegant as only a Sprague wife could be. Gentility swished in her skirts and billowed in her hair. "And for months I've wanted to discuss your book."

Pemberton stepped away, his face impassive. He studied the intricate pineapples and melons in the walnut newel post. When he turned back, he saw hellish laughter in Gale's eyes.

The Sprague wife was saying, most archly—"—tell us about their dances sometime. What shocking things! I've heard the Navajos—would you believe it, Mr. Gale—without a—a stitch. Men and—squaws!" She swept the spangled white gauze of a fan before her face.

They abandoned hope of the veranda. Marian Warren, passing with her sister-in-law, turned hastily away. The sister-in-law gave Pemberton a glance of ice, and swept her skirts protectively aside. A door promised quiet. They found themselves in a library. Gale sat on a bench and produced a cigar.

"Mrs. Sprague finds my book less fascinating than 'The Last of the Mohicans,' " he confessed.

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"Herman's going to do some reading."

Pemberton studied the shelves that covered one wall. Gale, joining him, ran an eye over the titles. He picked one out and turned to the pasted card of a St. Louis dealer.

"Wholesale," he said.

"Yeh. Probably Herman hornswoggled some one with a bad debt."

Oh dig my grave both wide and deep, (wide and deep)
Put tombstones at my head and feet, (head and feet)
And on one stone carve a turtle-dove
To signify I died of love (died of love.)

The quartette was loud and intricate just outside the door. "Electric light, too," Pemberton said. He turned it out. Yellows and crimsons from Japanese lanterns splotched the floor. Violins began on the veranda. The rustle of waltzing feet—young Windsor at a fête. . . . The evening was Mrs. Kleinfeld's triumph. Belle Paris had proved her most powerful ally. At last, hounding Herman with Dutch oaths and cooking, and always fondling his greatness, she had got a house fitted to his glory. Rebellious at first, cursing his women, Herman had achieved first resignation, then interest, and finally pride. The house became a mansion, a Kleinfeld possession, the symbol of Kleinfeld success.

Red sandstone and a gabled roof. Granite steps and pillars and coping. A cupola, a tower, a tumorous hexagonal swelling. Paintings on the walls and ceilings. Brussels carpets. Mahogany. Stained glass. And poetry had gone into its design. For, directly above the front door, in Herman's own room, he had built a magnificent window, and the frame of it was a

horseshoe in red sandstone, complete to nailheads of granite. There would be fortune above the Kleinfeld door for ever.

The quartette was faint now, somewhere above stairs where Anna and her daughters displayed to Windsor matrons how soiled clothes might be dropped through a chute to the basement, or how a pink marble basin was set cunningly into a wall. Good will impelled them on, from song to song, from the punch in the drawing room to the beer keg in the basement, where Windsor husbands preferred to stay.

"Bring back, Bring back, Bring back my Bonnie to me, to me," they sang. Almost at once they were pleading, "Come where my love lies dreaming." In the basement a counter-bass began "When the bell in the lighthouse rings, ding-dong."

"Room enough to kennel four sons and their brats," Pemberton said. "They'll need it, too, when Herman dies. The boys, they're not bright. They'll lose everything but papa's headstone in a year."

Gale, at the window, watched the colors of lanterns and dresses on the lawn. The quartette reached it as he looked. "When you hear dem cannons awful roar," they began. From all about, the dresses and the Prince Alberts surrounded them. Voices took up the song; the house answered. Some one found a flag and waved it, to the menace of the lanterns. "There'll be a hot time in the old town tonight," Kleinfeld's housewarming chorused pugnaciously. The group broke up into smaller nuclei. Handclapping attested universal ardor. One of the nuclei began an encore.

"Is there a relative somewhere in the army?" Gale asked.

"Not likely. Bunch of bums from the railroad and

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a congressman. Town's showed more sense than I'd have thought—oh, it doesn't cost anything to clap."

"Between two lives," Gale said sententiously. "That's Windsor. That's the West. That's my next book. Their fathers banged their heads into life—they had to. Their sons may—I pray to God they have to. But if anyone lives in Windsor"—except, he meant, except Pemberton Abbey—"then I've had no sign of it. Dull, dead—not even war is real."

"This war ain't, anyway, John, and you know it. Way to tell a war is, who's gettin' rich from it?"

Gale shook his head. "Any war is real when you risk a bullet through your lungs. And there's too much earth in me to think this isn't a generous war."

"Generous as hell to contractors. May affect the tariff on sugar, too. Yah—Bryce told 'em. No Bryan for him—he won't set a curse on a war and then ask to be a colonel in it. Old fightin' cock—damn if I haven't liked him again for the first time since he found out that farmers get rebates in heaven."

Gale had turned back to watch the lawn. He had let Pemberton coax him into this appearance. Pemberton wanted to affront Windsor which dared not refuse him welcome when he demanded it. He himself saw little profit in it. And he was afraid of his friend—afraid of the chasms of the Abbey soul that were too dark for even a historian's courage. One might lop off most of the ties that bound one to the race, and Gale might rejoice that so much freedom had brought itself to be under heaven, but there were those that must not be threatened. The man who was free of everything, the totally free man—it was a monster out of chaos.

Where, he wondered, still gazing at the lanterns and

the dresses and the Prince Alberts, where is the passion and the peril? Where is the equality and the rising hope? Where is the courage and the hardihood? Where is the bright face of danger? Where is desire? "There is no frontier," he said, "there never was one, there never will be——" except, he told himself, except in the Abbeys. "What a lie to say that anywhere the race pulls itself above the stature."

A man came into the library, apologized elaborately when the light he switched on disclosed the occupants, and bowed to Pemberton.

"John," said Pemberton, "this is Milnor Allison, one of my partners at the Porphyry State Bank."

"Mr. Gale!" Milnor bowed again. "I have hoped for the honor. The evening amuses you? Not precisely, not quite what we are used to. But jovial, high spirited—quite altogether from the heart."

Milnor making high praise of Gale's volume on the Goisute Indians, they strolled out into the drawing room. It was more crowded, more exhilarated. The host in person, Herman in a Prince Albert, gold chains, and vestees, shone like a well-polished apple and had mounted a chair to make a speech.

"First time in ten years Herman's spent enough to buy anyone three drinks straight," Pemberton remarked.

"It is a good pardy," Herman was announcing. "You gentlemen and ladies—and I'm one, too. When I build a house, it is a house you are proud to show, a house Windsor will be proud of. There ain't its equal from Omaha to Frisco. Men will stop off the trains going through to see the Kleinfeld house. We are all good fellows and ladies. We have made money in Windsor. I am a good fellow, too, and I am an old

soldier, too. You will see—I am a Grand Army man and tomorrow I will give the G. A. R. a hundret dollars. You should drink my punches—there is in them the best money can buy. No—that is not enough. I am a good fellow. I will show you.”

He swayed off the chair and trotted out of the room. The wife of Herman Jr. made after him, timidly. The other wives turned their eyes toward the floor and shrank closer to the walls. There was bumping and clatter. Herman returned dragging a case from which excelsior spilled out on the rose-pink Brussels carpet.

“Champagne,” he said blandly, “here is a case of it. Nothing is too good for my friends. It cost me three dollars a boddle. There is more in the closet. All you want.”

“We can go now,” Pemberton whispered. “I wasn’t hoping for that much.”

Milnor strolled with them toward the gate. They saw annoyance on his face. Under a trio of lanterns a group was applauding some one who was dancing alone. There was a gleaming of skirts, with now and then a slender ankle thrust out of them. To own silk stockings, in Windsor, was to be a wealthy or an abandoned woman; to display more than a slipper showed of them was to suggest that one was not necessarily wealthy. In exhibiting four inches of white silk Elizabeth Allison was behaving as only an Easterner of position might behave.

She ended her dance with a bow that spread skirts over as much lawn as she had danced on. She felt disapproval from the gate, and, slipping through the circle, repeated the bow before Milnor.

“My dear brother,” she said, “the dance was taught to me at the most proper of schools for young ladies.”

Milnor, even in the light of tinted lanterns, was flushed. "I did not think it appropriate," he observed. His elbows jerked. "Miss Elizabeth Allison, my sister," he particularized, "Mr. John Gale and Mr. Pemberton Abbey."

"Milnor imagines that a woman lives in Windsor for a year without knowing your names." Her smile went to each in turn. "Mr. Gale, you have the loveliest flowers in Windsor. And you, Mr. Abbey, are so terrifying that I run to hide when you are in our block."

"You needn't. Have you got a horseless carriage yet, Miss Elizabeth?"

"Good Gad, Abbey—we've had to beseech her not to. My brother Hobart trembles still."

"Not yet," she said seriously. "I've ridden, in Chicago. Have you, Mr. Abbey?"

"I will the minute they build one that can take me to the Whitetail."

Gale said, "It won't be long. It will immeasurably sadden my years. I've loved horses as few men love women."

He noticed that the girl looked curiously at Pemberton. The tales that Windsor must have poured into her ears! So the Allisons had protected their sister from their partner. A lovely young woman, more mature than he had thought, her coppery hair coiled, in defiance of the mode, low on her head. Her dress fell sharply away from shoulders of the purest youth. And gray eyes not quite youthful, but wise and courageous, smiled a little mockingly at all three of them.

Pemberton moved brusquely away. Gale bowed and

followed him. He observed the derisive smile on her lips and saw Milnor lift a finger toward a sermon.

"I should think Miss Allison might be spared rudeness," Gale protested.

"Didn't want her to let them hens see her talking where I was any longer than need be," Pemberton said carelessly. "Herman's got a snootful tonight. . . . Walk it off?"

Gale assented and they turned eastward under the stars. The peaks were laquered black under a late moon that had just crawled above them. Gale's heart rose in its unfailing greeting to the hills. June in the mountains! He could at once forget Herman and all the lice of Windsor. But that remote, passionless splendor was too oppressive to be endured. His thoughts raced back to the war, to the men who might die tomorrow. At this moment Sampson might be steaming into the harbor. For the sake of—what? Did Herman Kleinfeld, did Windsor, count in it at all? Or were they, perhaps, everything in the world, everything that destiny contemplated. It might be that stars had crumbled and planets died that the lice of Windsor might infest the world.

"And that," he said, "is what may eat the rock from beneath you, and plunge you into the sea."

"Be a damn good joke on me," Pemberton threw back his head and roared. "I'd laugh myself into a fever."

Several years had altered the mountain in no particular whatever. Midsummer sun struck back the same fire from its mingled rust and silver. Above it, the desert sky was unalloyed. At its base the shadow of a cliff was still cobalt. Gale could see no sign of man upon it, no evidence that impotence was to begin the scratching of the unconquerable. It was remote, passionless, serene—lordly, and impotent, and dead.

But when he squinted he could see, far below him, along the bottom of the canyon, a filament that glinted in the sun, loosely spun from curve to curve. That would be the track that joined Pemberton to the track of the Piegan Condor, over which he had traveled up Whitetail and Piegan. On the basis of that, one could believe in other changes. Yes, puny, at the widest space at the foot of the mountain, there were dikes and mounds of something—binoculars revealed them to be crushed rock. And now, upon that pink and silver immensity, he could observe three infinitesimal shelves, with dots on them that gave off smoke and steam. There were a dozen such dots on the first shelf, half as many on the second, three only on the third.

The dots were steam-shovels. Gale, from this height, could believe in them, could apprehend and understand them, as he had not been able to when he stood among them. Steam-shovels biting away at the mountain of copper. Pecking at the copper mountain.

Gale's mind swung insanely to his boyhood fable of eternity. Once in a thousand years a bird flew from the North Pole. It sharpened its beak on a rock a thousand miles high. When that rock should be worn utterly away, one moment of eternity would have passed.

Pemberton nibbling at the copper mountain. Step by step, shelf by shelf. Up to the summit. In to the core. Nibble by nibble. Till the copper mountain should be an Edam cheese after the holidays. Till the copper mountain should be a moon that waned to the last day of the fourth quarter. Till the copper mountain should be dust that fell in a mound and was lifted and blown away.

Gale turned back toward the floor of the canyon, toward men and noise and friends. He was lonely. Dread and horror sat upon him. Pemberton sharpening his bill on rock. A mountain, a copper mountain, eaten away through eternity. Untouched, to an eye five miles away, centuries after the last of the Gales and the Abbeyes had been forgotten.

A train of pygmy cars backed round the bend and stopped by the piled ore, as Gale reached it. Fourteen cars, the size of overgrown wheelbarrows. A toy engine wheezed, spitting steam and oil. Pemberton leaned out of it.

"There's John," he said.

The boy Gordon craned out to see his friend, reached upward for a lever, and blew piercing soprano blasts from the ridiculous whistle. His father tossed him to the ground and jumped after him.

Hordes of swarthy men now shoveled ore into the

cars. Jeff Farrand leaned against the engine and fed himself a new quid.

"Ey-God!" Jeff shouted, his mouth close to Pemberton's ear. "Bad enough if they didn't have to yell." He strolled toward the nearest one, and negligently kicked him. "Hey, Ginnie," he roared, "nix chanty—see? Quiet. Mooey piano."

But they shouted, all forty of them, till the cars were full of the gritty, unwieldy chunks. They ended with a concerted shout, and straggled back toward the huddle of buildings where their normal labor centered.

"Got to get that done by machinery," Jeff said. "Man'd go deaf round them Ginnies."

"Machines make money, you mean," Pemberton corrected him.

But, Gale saw, Jeff's fabulous imagination had already led him into future miracles. That was Jeff, now and always: engineering talent solemnly reported that some desirable thing could not be done, and then Jeff, who knew no engineering, half closed his sleepy eyes, dreamed for a while, and then absent-mindedly got it done without effort.

"Chutes," he said, "from level to level." With a nail he scratched a plan of the mountain on the painted side of the engine. He lined in the ladder of shelves, criss-crossed them with frameworks, and led them cumulatively toward the ground.

Pemberton clicked into comprehension. "Cost too much," he said decisively. "My God, Jeff, miles and miles of them, and what would you build them out of that wouldn't wear through faster'n you could fix it?"

Solemnly, Jeff scratched out his plan with an edge of rock. "OK. Can't get a flock of little angels, though, to carry it down on their wings. Gonna be a

problem, Pemberton, soon as we get a little far back."

"Solve it then. What the hell?"

"OK. Don't you fret, Pemberton. 'S long as rocks fall, there's a way to load 'em. Hey!" he yelled violently in the direction of the sheds. "Trundle up a parlor car!"

Two mules drew up an empty ore-car, and were unhitched from it. The preposterous engine backed the train into it and Pemberton kicked the coupling into place. He lifted Gordon into the car and waved Gale toward it. Jeff shoved his enormousness, joint by joint, into the engine cab. He wrung a shriek from the whistle.

Gordon between them, Gale and Pemberton hung their legs over the end-board of the car while the train groaned and bumped down Piegan Canyon. After labor, they passed the Piegan Condor, steam blowing from the hoist-houses. Gaining the chiselled sandstone of the Whitetail, the track hung from cliffs like a bat in a loft, raced hogbacks for the curves, plunged straight at impenetrable rock. The fall of the canyon dropping away from its level, it came out at last several hundred feet above the plain and sloped down in wide curves to the U. P. spur and the marvels that had been wrought there.

This was the desert. Endless miles it stretched out to the westward, on and on to what might be, infinitely far away, the spectres of lost and repellent mountains, or might be the mirage outraged eyes built to defend their sight. Between stretched the yellow and gray and lavender of the sage. Scorched by Summer, writhen by Winter. Broken by great gaps where alkali caught the sun and glimmered like mountain lakes. Eastward, the mountains that were scraped

clean of trees ran their line true, to the north and south as far as the eye could strain. Everywhere else—only sage and sun and the desolate odor of space.

But near at hand! The U. P. had pried a box car off its tracks and set it in the alkali. On a sign that had said "Piegan Condor," that legend was covered with faint white and above it was the word "Abbey," and symbols that told how Windsor was 103.7 and Ralston 156.3 miles away. Squarely at one end of the car the spur ended, and the other track began. . . . The Abbey works.

There were pine buildings by the gross: acid-sheds, store-houses, mess-shacks, bunk-houses, machine-shops, canteens, forge-houses, round-houses, powder-houses, tool-sheds. Among them all ran whorls of narrow-gauge tracks that looped and joined and criss-crossed and finally plunged through a half-dozen openings into a brick structure as enormous as a fortress. Its walls stretched down the alkali many hundreds of feet, and above it two stacks were reared against the sky, their fragile strength symbolically debauched by the slate-gray smoke that rolled from them. All about the fortress there were levels to which the tracks climbed by ramps and, at intervals, ports opened to spit out green flames. . . . The smoke from the Gothic stacks drew a sullen spiral about Gale and Pemberton on the ground.

"Four days it's taken to get up that fire," Pemberton's fingers sank into Gale's forearm. Their outline would be there next day. "Ten minutes more she'll be running her first charge. . . . Hey, Jeff, run out that ore up there and run in what we rode down on. We'll smelt some lint from John's pants in the first charge."

Jeff bellowed and made semaphores of his arms.

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Boys ran to him. Presently, from the high butts of the near end, the twin of their engine began to bring down a longer train that had been poised there. Jeff sat again at his throttle. The cars moved slowly up the incline.

They were in place on a platform above a honeycomb of steel and wood, outside the wall. Gale and Pemberton and Gordon craned back to stare far up the framework. Above them Jeff climbed to some crow's-nest. They could see him, black against the sky. He was waving. Pemberton snatched off his hat and gave it to his son.

"Wave it, Gordy. Wave it like you'll never wave to a woman all your life."

All one side of the platform collapsed. Fourteen cars shot their ore into a maw that the collapse disclosed. Steel and stone fought together. It was as if a landslide had been contrived within walls.

How did a man act when, with his own eyes, he saw brought into being before him that which his will had ordained? Gale could see nothing except that those eyes no longer smouldered but burned with a fire that did not waver, and that the fissure between his brows was sunk deep and long. And his hands held Gordon's shoulders.

Jeff came back. They entered, through a deep arch, a vaulted dimness where wheels and gears and rollers spun amid shriekings out of hell. Far across it, at the narrower end, arches opened on other vaults where fires leaped out. Pemberton strode ahead of them to an armchair by a switchboard, fenced off with stone and iron.

A dozen different lights distorted his face. He reached up one hand, while the guardian of the

switches stood poised to leap at him, then paused. "Shall I do it? No, by God! Here, son." He raised Gordon to the highest switch. "Don't touch where it shines. Grab hold of that handle. Now pull it down and shove it home!" He had shouted the last words; they rang across the vault.

Gordon shoved it home. And at once the fortress began to shudder and sway. The shrieking of the rollers sank beneath a din that crushed in one's ears, plucked at the spine, pinched up the skin in wrinkles. . . . Gale rejoiced when they were outside and desert quiet could be heard above the muffled roar within.

"Sit down, John," Pemberton said. "Get in the shade and watch that left-hand stack."

Gale did indeed sit down, on a bag of marl in the shade of a tool-house. He needed to. A trembling had come upon him. His stomach seemed void and cold. But Pemberton, legs wide apart, stood beside Jeff Farrand and stared at the oily curls of smoke. Minutes passed, lengthened, grew intolerable. Gale felt himself drawn to the edge of a chasm, buffeted and desperate with expectation. Some irrevocable thing was to be before him.

Pemberton's watch gave back a glint of sun. "Forty-seven minutes. She's two minutes from the first furnace." The watch dropped into the alkali. He lifted Gordon to his shoulders. "Watch, son, watch that smoke."

In the deep black smudge, suddenly, there was a puff of something strange. Something leprous-green. It blew outward like an inflating balloon, then shot straight up. Gordon shouted. . . . Pemberton set

him down and slowly unjointed himself to sit beside Gale.

He said, "Well, I'm making copper for the trade."

Jeff reached for a stick and squatted in the alkali. "I just thought of something, Pemberton." He drew curves. "Back yonder in Piegan. We got to lead that water off them levels more sensible. Why pipe it off here and let it sink? Lord knows we can use all the water we got—well here——"

The stick made diagrams in the desert. Pemberton leaned forward to study them.

At the Porphyry State, Pemberton crumpled up sheets of figures resplendently inked in green and red. He scattered them across the carpet. "To hell with figures. That's your job. Don't bother me with how fast interest ought to multiply. You get out and make it breed. I'm a copper man."

"It is a most precarious and appalling situation," Hobart said.

"Quite unparalleled in our experience," Milnor added in antiphon.

"—to tie up a bank"—a bank, one gathered, was the tabernacle of the Lord—"so intimately to one business—why, Mr. Abbey, if the mine and smelter go—and, mind you, we're not allowed a word in their management—if they go, the bank will be swallowed up whole."

"They won't go—that's my job. Your job's to make this bank breed every cent it can for the mine, till the mine's full blast. Then you make money—why, you knee-knockers, did you fight a round with Krug to let a copper mine scare you? You're bankers—

that's your trade. You sit tight. You're the Copper bank. Five years, you'll be sittin' on Windsor's neck. Ten years! You know what the Copper bank will be in ten years. Want to back out?"

"By no means. You misunderstand us, Mr. Abbey." This was Milnor. "Would we have joined you if we hadn't risked our best judgment? Only, as a financial policy, this concentration is so reckless, so unparalleled——"

"——so unjustified by good financial sense"——and this, Pemberton felt sure, was Hobart,—"that we're naturally a bit disturbed. To surrender our bank to the exigencies of your mines and smelters—not but that we feel sure you're the best Copper man in the world——"

"Then shut the windows and sleep tight. You keep Windsor off my tail and I'll boost you up in the Krug class. Now for God's sake blow your nose and wipe your eyes and go back to your cancellations."

The door to the cashier's office swung open, to a rustle of skirts. "My dear Elizabeth," Milnor said, "it is understood that you are not to intrude——"

"Your house is on fire," Elizabeth said, "and your children will burn."

"There is nothing that can possibly interest you here. Hobart and I are just going——"

"I thought you might be."

"——and Mr. Abbey has indicated how pressing his concerns are."

"I can rest here, then." She arranged her skirts in a frosting about the chair. She looked serenely at her brothers, who, side by side, frowned at her and tried to think her out of the room. "Oh, don't be silly, Milnor. Do you want me—is there any reason I shouldn't talk to——"

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"By no means," he said hurriedly. "But you must not bother business men. I'll drive you home in—fifteen minutes." At the door, he looked back over Hobart's shoulder and scowled some prohibition at her.

Pemberton was stuffing manila envelopes into a valise. He reached for his hat.

"Then you are busy?"

He sat down again. "Have they ever run you?" he asked.

"Not for fifteen years. I'm twenty-four."

"You do what you want."

"Pretty much. . . . That's why there is some danger in our meeting, Mr. Abbey, though heaven knows that's not why my brothers are so set against it."

Pemberton grunted. "You know why?"

"You're going to disappoint me if you don't see I've as many brains as you have."

Pemberton was nonplussed. He did not know what to think of this woman and did not know what to say to her. Some instinctive clarity told him that all he had ever known of other women would with this one, only betray him. He felt in her a courage that was all unlike what women had meant to him. He resented his awkwardness. He decided to get away. . . . Filling the valise, he dropped a package which banged against the floor, broke open, and spilled bright objects about Elizabeth's feet.

She smiled in pleasure as the sun gleamed on burnished copper. Pemberton placed on the desk an ink-stand, a paper knife, and a small chest which inclosed two smaller chests. He looked about for paper to wrap them in.

"That's your copper, isn't it?" she asked. "Is it the first that came out of your smelter?"

"There's nothing to laugh at, if it is. I took some to a jeweler."

"I'm not laughing. . . . The knife and inkstand are for Mr. Gale. The box—that's for your son. . . . You're living up to what I thought about you, Mr. Abbey. Will you come to dinner Sunday? I live with Milnor, you know."

"Me at a dinner table?"

"Well, perhaps not. Then, I'd like to go driving on Sunday."

Pemberton grinned. "Let's get this straight. You don't think it's funny, me having these doodads made?"

"I think it's something finer than I had expected to see in Windsor. Don't you know, Mr. Abbey, that only a woman would think to have such things made?"

"But I'm telling you, you're crazy as a loon if you let yourself get seen on the street with me."

"If I'm not afraid of you, am I afraid of the people you've—well, shall I say, been not exactly considerate of? I've seen your bays—will you let me ride behind them Sunday?"

"Will I drive you home now?"

"I think it might please Milnor. Yes—do."

Damn! The girl had meant what she said. She swept through the bank on his arm and, when Milnor and Hobart converged toward them from separate inclosures, smiled graciously at both and chatted to Pemberton. His horse, in a light trap, was hitched to a ring in the curb. Helping her in, he stooped to retrieve her handkerchief which had fallen.

"No," she decided, "you know how, but it doesn't fit you. I dropped it on purpose, of course. But no,

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Mr. Abbey, it's other things I expect to find in you—not the attentions I can get from any bank-clerk."

"Well," he said, "I've got a little of that first-run left."

"I thought you might have."

"If I had it made into a——"

"Oh, a hat-pin, or a comb, or a bracelet. A woman would be proud to wear it."

"You'd be a fool if you did." Pemberton flicked the whip across the iron-gray's back.

He had thought of a comb. Rhoda Cartright, Will's wife, had lately been gracious, in oblique and tentative ways, discreetly straining the city's taboo of him. Well, Rhoda might wear her own combs, in hair that was by no means comparable to the glinting splendor that curled beneath the straw hat at his side.

"I see," John Gale said.

He sprawled, inelegantly, in a deep cordovan chair. Light from shaded bulbs caught facets on the decanter at his side, diamond clear and wine-red. He drew at his panatela, closed his eyes, sighed out smoke that curled toward the lamps.

"Altitude," he said. "It's a blight on cigars. Havana leaf turns rancid.

"I see," he repeated. "Your bank amasses the savings of as many Windsorites as you can lure into it. Then you devote their savings to your mine."

"Credit! Don't be stupid—it creates credit. Don't you know what that is?"

"It was what made a historian of me. I came West to guard my family's investments, remember. Oh, I

understand very well, and I still see that you are expropriating Windsor capital to run your mine."

"Well?"

"Nothing. . . . It's a curious twist, selling a people into slavery, raising Frankenstein's beast in the desert to devour the children of Windsor."

Pemberton gulped what was left of his port—port that had aged forty years in the cellar of Gale's father. "I told you. But wait. Savings are nothing. Wait till there's mills. Wait till copper's being manufactured into things right here along the rivers. Ten, twenty, thirty years. It'll buy and sell their food. It'll own them body and soul. It'll bring them into the world. I told you all that." He lay back in his chair, serene. "It's on the way."

Gale sent out more smoke curling upon itself toward the shaded lamp. He himself went quietly through these years: the memory of his wife was an autumn day, his daughter was strong of limb and heart, there were books to write, and the Western sun was a gracious gold on slopes and peaks and valleys. But Pemberton Abbey! He looked at him now, abruptly aware that ten years had flaked into ashes since their first evening together. Ten years had beaten against Pemberton and had left him only a little more gaunt, a little more inhumanly effective—stone shaped into design. He was quiet now, where ten years ago he had been as uneasy as summer lightning—he had learned, merely, to husband his energies against the need, not let them escape in sparks. He was contained within himself, brooding eternally on the thing he must bring to be.

"I'd dream less by night," Gale said, "if I knew that

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you knew what you're doing. Or what you're used for. Or why you are."

And Pemberton said—amazingly, "Don't kick me about in that direction, John. I'm beginning to learn how to wonder about myself. That's bad."

"No youth. You were older than God's turtle when you were born."

"Yeh? John, sometimes I wake up nights and want to bawl for my old man. . . . They had guts, then."

"Or had they? If I were sure, I'd write a different history of them. . . . For of all the myths," said John Gale, "of all the myths, those that do most damage on our tongues are the ones that stem from freedom. And if Jim Abbey spent his life chasing freedom with a salt-shaker in one hand and a sack in the other, so have you, and I can tell you it's a word the gods use when they bait the most despised fools to suicide. It's a word a man will not turn his eyes on if he would stay sane. A word that has addled a myriad lives which might have gone toward death with quiet decency. It has held before you the gleaming mirage of power—power to be free. And it's chained you to a rock that had its own vulture—and the freedom you've brought to be is the slavery of a State for ever."

"Well, it's mine."

That ended the matter for good, Gale supposed. The John Gales of the world would have an easier time if they could come to ignore what Pemberton Abbey ignored. . . . What was there in the ten years to dress him in sober broadcloths, with starched linen and smoothed hair? As well hang the summit of Mount Paul with lattice and scroll work.

"But she's ripping out rock, John, and she's roasting out copper. I've got that done and lived. There's no

sport in battlin' to hold something after you got it made. . . . I feel like a light-globe with a hole in it. But it's to hell with the bird that's caught short—there ain't time to howl. Only I did love those stinks."

And the night-watches that went with them—the flame of a man's desire in the darkness. Gale studied Pemberton's face. Was there, could there ever be, a mark of satiation, or worse, of weariness? Could the zest go out of it, the will flag? If Pemberton Abbey could regret what had been, or be indifferent to what was to come—if he could distrust his past or turn one shoulder from the future, then indeed there was no solace for the heart to cling to, but only the desolate and terrible laughter of God.

Pemberton stretched himself with less abandonment—after ten years. "Jeff Farrand's drawing pictures of seven miles of bucket-lines. If I was the partner of J. Pierpont the bills would give him a fever. But I can't trust Krug. And by Spring they'll be after me, Windsor and the whole damn country, like curs after the waste of a slaughter-house. Yah! John, you go write a history of Windsor's Boiling Hot-Pot Springs. Will you? There's plenty fools left—I don't need to fret."

December buried the Piegan and the Whitetail under drifts no plough could push a way through. The fourth and fifth levels at the Abbey mine, which had been clawed out during the Summer, were indistinguishable from the other three, and the steam-shovels on them all could be laid bare only by gangs of men who must be fed and thawed out and warmed with whisky. All month Pemberton and Jeff Farrand bullied their crews to work. All month Pemberton spurred himself on to shatter ore from the mountain's face though the elements forbade. If a slide sent a steam-shovel hurtling into the canyon, he telephoned his lawyers to collect insurance and get releases from the widows—and cursed half-frozen Magyars to more desperate assaults.

"We've got to find a way to stop slides, Jeff. We've got to find a way to keep Krug's track clear. And a way to work a level when it's ten feet deep in snow."

"Maybe"—Jeff was an Eskimo in rabbit furs and sheep-skins—"maybe you'd like me to lay steam-pipes all to hell and gone over the hill?"

"I don't give a damn if you have to jack up the sun on props. Get me a mine that'll turn out copper every day in the year. Or by God, we'll all be sunk."

Jeff grunted and wondered whether he could devise movable snow-sheds.

Five days before Christmas, pot-bellied clouds hung low on the canyon and presently broke open in a slow,

inexorable snow. All day long it fell, dulling the clatter of ore rolling from one level to another. From the office-shanty, they could not see the electric plant, nor guess the smoke and clamor of twenty steam-shovels. The next morning Pemberton found the fall undiminished, and blew the "no shift" whistle at the shanty. The bunk-houses were steamy with sweat and noisy with men at their ease. Day after day the fall kept on; drifts climbed to the windows, eaves stood out like haystacks swathed in gauze. The camp rejoiced in food and warmth, with no work to be done beyond keeping a trail broken to the Piegan Condor.

The skies were clear on the morning before Christmas, but the windows of the shanty were opaque with frost. Pemberton had sat down to the cook's coffee and cakes when Jeff appeared.

"She's dropped thirty degrees since bed-time. Ten below now. Yeh, and I'll bet half of the damn engineers in camp let their fires out. My God, Pemberton, we pay enough in old-iron and boilers—yes, and she'll hit twenty below by noon and eight degrees below absolute zero before midnight. Is this a copper mine or is it a damned glacier?"

"Anyway, it's not a weather-bureau."

"How can I make copper on top of a mountain in December?"

"Well," Pemberton said, "you can, anyway, heave a gang out and uncover enough coal so's they won't freeze the rest of their boilers. Yes, and you can start making copper any time you feel the fit coming on. I'm going to Windsor."

"Yeh? Just how?"

"They'll shove the freight out of Abbey by noon anyway."

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Jeff grew concerned. "*Our* track's five feet under snow anyway. How in hell can you get to Abbey?"

"Walking's good." Pemberton began to lay out a staggered shirt, a leather vest, a fur cap, a short sheepskin coat. He studied the row of boots in the corner.

"Don't be a fool, Pemberton." Jeff was now genuinely alarmed. "I've got a wife, but I'm staying. Take them seven miles on snowshoes? Why, it's twenty below here where the wind can't blow. You'll kill yourself——"

Pemberton glowered at him. "You hear me say I'm going to Windsor?"

"It's the first time I heard you talk like a fool. Listen, Pemberton, you're in the mountains in winter time. What'll you do if it starts to snow?"

"At twenty below? Run your head through an acid-bath, but don't tell me how to act. Give me those snowshoes."

But Jeff accompanied him as far as the Condor. Below Krug's mine, there was no making out even the embankment that the track ran on. Level snow buried it deep. Cliffs and gigantic rocks were honed clean against sky and snow. Every peak wore a collar of congealed cloud, and, at immense distances, pillars of mist stood frozen still in place.

The sun came out from an ice-mist and turned the snow carmine. It should have blinded him, had not the wind, rising at the same moment, whipped tears into his eyes, which froze at once. The wind was a tangible wall, the face of a glacier. Pemberton faced into it. His gloves cleared his eyes momentarily, so that he could squint and find the three-quarters-buried poles of Krug's telephone line, which alone showed his way for him. He drew his cap down and his sheepskin collar up, to protect as much as possible of his

face, and lengthened the reach of his snowshoes. His hips rolled easily, the thrust of his legs was clean. He felt alive, invincible. This was a man living.

By noon he was at Abbey, pouring coffee and brandy into himself. The short coal-train was ready to leave. Pemberton took a chair in the caboose, beside the red-hot stove, set out his flask and tobacco pouch for the crew and went to sleep. It was nearly ten, and snowing in the warmer lowlands, when he wakened to the train banging over the side-tracks at Windsor. He found a cab at the station, drove to the cottage and made sure that Venice had done all he had ordered for Gordon's Christmas, stood a moment above his sleeping son, and then began to make himself ready.

The cab took him again into the storm. The windows of St. Anthony's through the snow, green and crimson, turquoise and mauve. Midnight mass.

St. Anthony's bells were ringing the mass, distantly, through snow, when he paused for a moment where the light came through Milnor's door. A docile Eastern servant took his coat. He strode past Windsor dignitaries till he came to a room where, her back toward a log fire, Elizabeth was filling the cups thrust at the punchbowl. A dozen men saw her eyes flash and her cheeks answer them. She bowed to the dozen over her own cup, left them disregarded, and led him into the hall. At the far end, up three steps, was a curtained alcove with another fire.

"How could you come tonight?"

"Freight got in at ten."

"But—from the mine?"

"Oh, snowshoes. Wasn't bad going."

"Pemberton! Not alone! Not on snowshoes, in the mountains—why, it's Winter."

"Well," he said surlily, "I wanted to see you."

She lifted his hand, smiled, and held it for a moment. He jerked away from her. His forearm on the mantel, he scowled at her untroubled smile.

"Pemberton. . . . Are you afraid of me?"

"Afraid! . . . How do you stand all this gas and clinkers? Why do you trick yourself out with ruffles and glassware? My God, a woman like you—I'd think they'd gag you."

"Of course, you really long for all this yourself. You love the sound of silk." She smoothed the violet satin of her dress across his hand. "You love the touch of it. You tremble when you hear silver and glass. I don't think it's particularly male of you."

Her shoulders rose from the lace of her bodice. They were as perfectly outlined as a winter ridge against the sky. Half involuntarily, his hand moved to touch them. She stepped sideward and her voice did not rise.

"If I tell you to leave the house, Pemberton, you'll go."

With an intolerable surge of rage, he realized that he would. No other woman had governed him. She was fenced in steel. He knew of fire behind the steel. She drew him with the power of high places. A power within himself, against himself, defying his will—a power that impelled him to assent in his own defeat, that revealed to him his own desire to be vanquished. For the first time in his life he felt confusion within him, contrary wills, weakness—yes, panic. His impulse, heightened almost to frenzy, was to leave the house incontinently. Obstinacy held him, or shame, or self-contempt.

"I can read you like a page of the Herald," she said excitedly.

"Let's go back to the crowd. Disappear with me, and their tongues will clang like a fire alarm."

"I'm willing. But—we'll go. Only——" she had caught one hand to her cheek. A diamond flashed back the flames from the grate. "You did come from the mine to see me—on Christmas Eve—to see me. A woman must be—exalted—you took your life in your hands. So—Pemberton——"

Her arms locked behind his head, and she kissed him. He caught at her, but she wrenched away, urging him into the hall. He saw that her cheeks had whitened.

She was sobbing. "I was a fool. I was a fool."

But, among the revelers, she was serene. She moved from group to group at Pemberton's side, and Windsor, in respect to Eastern aristocracy, was civil to the local libertine. Kleinfelds, Warrens, Holbrooks, Spragues, Dunlaps, McNamaras, Hallowells, and all the newer names that had sanction of prosperity—they bowed and smiled. But the feeling of affront was tangible. And of pity for the exquisite Miss Allison who so contaminated her innocent hands.

Back at the punchbowl she ministered to a changing group, which thinned as wifely arms drew men away. The room emptied. Elizabeth stood beside him at the fire.

"If it were only righteousness," she said, "I'd not feel so proud. Windsor skirts were made to be drawn aside. What an abomination you are, Pemberton, to women. But it's deeper. The men are afraid. Deathly afraid of you."

"John says it's a clan. Maybe that means some-

thing. Anyway, John knows about Digger Indians. Don't"—his voice leaping into violence—"don't for God's sake stand here talkin' to me alone."

"Do you suppose you can order me about as if I were a Hunky at the mine?"

"I'm only sayin' that the town will——"

"Do you, Pemberton? I think you've slave-driven too many women. Too many Alices have trembled at your frown."

Again his fists tensed. And again fear darted along his nerves—to discover that anyone on earth could move him against himself. The door—in God's truth, the panic was on him to dash out the door away from the sight of Elizabeth Allison, who could disturb him.

"What's up?" he growled, more disturbed to find his voice uncertain. "You act like——"

"Yes?"

"God's name—what are you trying out?"

"Woman-stuff," she confessed. At once she was smiles and softness. She smoothed the wide circumference of her dress. Her shoulders, tinted by the fire, rippled to the rhythm of her laughter.

"Elizabeth!" he groaned. "Elizabeth, why did you have to have hair like that?" She frowned, dismayed. "Copper," he said against his will. "It's the color of fine copper."

"Bewilderment," she announced dispassionately, "will make a poet of you. . . . I'd not expected a poet from a hard-rock man—hardly from the West—never from Windsor. Not six-feet two of poet with shoulders of hard-rock and, oh, Pemberton, a scowl that would kill a Hunky at a hundred yards."

"What the——"

"—devil!" She swayed nearer to him. "I don't

know. I'd tell you if I did. It's—my head's turned a little. And I'm frantic to show you all women don't tumble into your hands at a whistle."

"Good-night," he said.

He turned his back on her and started away. That, he felt, was bad, a defeat. She laughed suddenly with serene and crystal enjoyment. He stopped, faced about, looked at her. That, he knew, was worse,—a rout.

"If there is nothing left but dignity," she jeered.

There was one way to regain the mastery. But she anticipated him and, with three quick steps, put the table between them. He watched her cheeks waver with the fire, her breath come less evenly. Her eyes slid away from his, were veiled and rose again, now sobered.

"But you must go away—not for that—I'd take you in my arms before all the Kleinfelds, all the Spragues in Windsor. No. Drive me in a cutter tomorrow. But tell me good-night now. "Oh!" She stamped her foot. "Don't think that, either. You've no reason to smile."

She held out both hands to him across the table. "Only—kiss them, Pemberton. As though you were a *man*! Only, you did come to see me on Christmas Eve. I'm—I'm a bit excited by the—by the implications."

He went out through the clan of Windsor. Rhoda Cartright sent him smiles and reproaches over her husband's shoulder. He glared at her. He took off up through a whirlwind of snow, in the direction of the river. At dawn he was still walking. He had exhausted every curse he could dredge from his years in the world. And still he did not understand Eliz-

abeth Allison, nor had he quieted the secret panic in his heart.

At the Porphyry State Bank, the brothers Allison flanked Pemberton like untried troops rushed to support an attack. Behind their table, all three of them faced the mighty of Windsor. Had the Spragues and the Dunlaps grown so great that one of each must accompany Kleinfeld and Whitaker when they blew boots-and-saddles for a foray? So it seemed. And Wilbur Cartright, son-in-law to the Senator.

He felt himself irresistible. Their very gathering there proved him conqueror. He had shown them up. He wanted to sweep them away like flies.

"Why, you fools," he roared at them, "you come here without knowing even how much of the dog belongs to me. Sure, the mine's incorporated. Sure, the smelters are incorporated. Any louse-head can read that at the Court-house. But, my God, to think that the capital's named—and not to know where it is—or what my obligations are—or who they're with. To play me for a fool——"

"But it stands to reason," Whitaker said, "you're bankrupt right now. You can't run another month. No one man on earth can swing it. Don't be insane enough to bluff, Abbey. We *know* it's a job for a hundred men, for a community, for a State."

"I took it out from under your feet. Go whistle up a gopher-hole, Tom. Tell you what I'll do. I'll sell you forty percent at par."

Whitaker and Kleinfeld swung toward each other. But Pemberton sliced across their eagerness. "Still fools! Buy your forty percent. I can use money—

sure, I can use all the money in the world. But find out where the rest of it is. You can't buy out the Allison boys. That's where it hurts. They don't own a share. Nor the Porphyry bank, either. It's mine—you fat fools—and it'll stay mine. Buy out, hell!—bribe their heads off, and I've still got you."

"Then," said Herman, "you are worse off still. I would not lend you a penny on it."

"Do you hear me asking?"

"You will. Everybody does. But I will not lend. Tom is right. You are a bankrupt man this minute."

"That's why you're trying to get on the wagon, huh?"

"We try to save you something, Pemberton, a little bit, and we try—a crash would be bad for Windsor."

"When I crash, Herman, you and Tom will be underneath. Nope. I know you—I've never run a hand up a badger hole. I know the two of you and your nose-wipers. But you won't learn—never. Listen: I don't put any man, least of all my partners, where he'll be able to sell me out to you. And listen—get this for good and all: I don't get my tail up and bolt. Nobody ever bluffs me. Nobody ever faced me down. Now get to hell out of my bank. The air smells bad."

The two Allisons faced him when the army of Windsor had departed. He caught a look of concern on Hobart's face.

"What's the matter?" he said. "Don't get your tail between your legs for them."

"You misunderstand me, Mr. Abbey," Hobart said. "I only wish there were more gentlemen in Windsor."

Pemberton grinned. He had found reason to like the Allisons. They had no panics, and therein they

differed from the clan of Windsor. They picked exquisite and daring ways through hostile finance. For all their gentility, they did not make mistakes.

He confided. "Hell's upset and spilled over. They'll be after us with war-clubs and medicine men and scalping knives."

Hobart and Milnor sat down again in upholstered chairs. Hobart disapproved the thin and fragrant Havana which Milnor clipped with a desk-knife. Milnor frowned his dislike of the Sweet Caporals which Hobart produced from a drawer. They smoked, casually. Hobart spoke of strategy.

"They will concentrate on the bank."

Pemberton fretted against the inescapable details of finance. They bored him. He preferred the Piegan.

"Oh, hell," he said, "never wait for them to make trouble for you——"

"That," said Hobart, "is what I've been trying to suggest——"

"Then get out and kick them in the guts."

"It's a singularly inelegant word. But nevertheless—yes, there's something—that's precisely what I propose."

Venice, who alone of the Bingham sisters could sometimes abate the Bingham grievance against Pemberton, chattered amiably enough at supper. Pemberton listened and winked at Gordon. After supper he took the boy into the cellar and constructed a wet-cell battery to propel a model smelter he had built for him. There was a prolonged ringing of the doorbell, Venice's voice summoning him, and, when he went up, Herman Kleinfeld, wrapped in mangy fur.

Herman rushed across the room. "Listen, Pemberton, my bank will not lend you money. That is not business—for you, you are already bankrupt. But there is, maybe, a little speculating can be done. Quiet, you see, on the side, just you and me. How much money can you use?"

"How much are you speculating?"

"Oh, be damned to you—do you never tell facts?"

"Never have."

"Can you use a million dollars?" At once, sweat broke out on Herman's forehead. Pemberton idly looked at him. "That is big money. God in heaven, I would have to steal it."

"I can use a million, sure. It ain't a patch on what I'll be using in five years. What's the terms?"

"I will not take a mortgage. Bah—your dinky smelters, your steam-shovels. Your cars and patents—you are bankrupt this minute and they ain't worth a cent on mortgage. But a million will maybe save you. What is it worth? Give me fifty-five percent of your stock and——"

Pemberton cast himself deep into the leather arm-chair and roared. His head fell back over the chair and his laughter clattered out through the cottage till Gordon came running, astonished to find his father's cheeks so red and moist.

"Run back downstairs and wait for your Dad," Pemberton told him. Then, controlled again. "Five hours to think of that, Fatty? Well, it's worth it to hear you admit with your own tongue that you're not in the poorhouse. Thanks, Herman. I've got a good opinion of your judgment. Any company you're willing to buy into——"

"All the Abbeys have all been fools," Herman

shouted. "You will say yes this minute or I'll never talk business——"

"Hey, don't bust a gut. Better give up booze or Belle Paris's girls, Herman—you're getting along in years. . . . Hell, you poor doodle! Do you think I'm not wise to you? Forty years in the West and don't know yet where to run a raffle. You don't get a share, see? You don't get anything, you poor ignorant beetle-head. Buy into my mine? Why, you gawk, if it's safe enough for you to get a yen after—listen, Herman, I'm done with Windsor for good. Now, get out. My kid's waiting for me."

Herman waved apoplectic hands, and suddenly a great desire came over Pemberton. He put an arm around Herman, shoved him to the threshold, and held him there.

"Here's this: if you or Tom step in my way I'll bust you open like a gutted fish. Now, will I wash your face in snow, or will you get out?"

He banged the door against Herman's fat back.

He made a quick trip East, tightening his defences wherever he could. Then back to the Piegan and the toil of the mine, the warfare against appalling snows. Winter did its utmost to smother copper at its birth. Slides ripped out tracks, hurled steam-shovels into the canyon, and tore shanties apart board by board. The smelters at Abbey ran at half-speed, then halved that, then halved it again. Only Pemberton's will kept the stream of copper flowing at all.

"My Lord, you going to cuff God's ears when he wants to snow a little?" Jeff asked.

"I'll boot your tail, anyway, if there's not a way to get ore, next Winter, and run it down to Abbey."

"All you need's an engineer. Me, I'm going back to Windsor and graft off the water-works."

Pemberton grinned. "Is there money enough in Washington to pry you away from this mine?"

But at night, when he spread his blankets on the canvas cot in the office-shanty, he could not long brood on copper. There was something far graver. He had discovered disturbing possibilities in his mind, had found the discipline of the years unable to keep his thoughts where they belonged. That a woman could usurp what was due to copper—that between him and the mine he had made might come the remembered shadows of a woman's throat! He had struggled to free himself from this quicksand, to kick himself back to the reality of mine and smelter. He had found for his own name new syllables of contempt. And, for all that, he fell asleep hearing her voice.

Till when Spring broke he found himself in Windsor for no other reason than to see her. He was shamed by the admission. For a week he drove with her and walked with her about the city of Windsor, while Milnor devised ingenious ways to keep him busy and told his partner that Jeff Farrand could by no means be trusted to keep the mine producing. Pemberton ignored the brother of Elizabeth, and Elizabeth flouted him. Over Windsor Valley the April skies filled with mists and the crying of north-bound geese. Pools gave back the chastity of clouds and there were violets, suddenly, on the Allison lawn.

But Elizabeth's arrogance seemed sustained only at the cost of exhaustion. When he looked at her unob-

served he found no laughter in her eyes. It was as if she supported with her last strength a strain that threatened to overcome her. And his own fierce delight in her was tempered by his self-scorn and his resentment. All this—Elizabeth, his will to succumb, his desire to yield to what fought openly with his plans—he had in no way intended. There was room in a man's life for but one purpose, one will, and that had nothing to do with a woman.

He cursed himself for having blundered upon a way to distinguish a woman from women—a way to think of Elizabeth Allison as he was sure women were thought of only by dupes and fools.

. . . Yet when he kissed her, passionate conviction answered in her lips. They had halted their horses above the yellow river in Windsor Canyon, side by side. Elizabeth leaned back from him, square in her saddle. She took the stiff three-cornered hat from her head and threw it on the ground.

“Damn! That does it, Pemberton——”

She leaned toward him again, and he lifted her free while her horse bolted down the canyon and he rowled his own horse. She was tight in his arms when the horse quieted. As well as she could, she loosened her hair, and drew it about their cheeks.

“You like it, don't you, Pemberton—my hair? . . .” Then, later, “But I can't wear corsets when I ride, and you're quite smothering me with your arm. I'll get down now and if you're wise you'll get my horse.”

While he trotted back, leading it, the turmoil in him resolved itself into clarity. Just how far was she from other women? It was a showdown now, or be damned to her.

She was leaning against a boulder above the creek and the sun was at its alchemy on her unbound hair. She was a virgin from a cathedral window—but Pemberton had felt fire in her quivering toward his lips.

"That did it," she said serenely. "Didn't it, Pemberton? It's cut bait and light out—now—or it's—go on."

The horses, the bridle-reins thrown over their heads, cropped young grass while he gazed at her and, above the raging of his blood, heard the creek among the stones.

And, amazingly, she had risen, stamped her foot, and was blazing at him. "It's over. Oh, you coward, why didn't you, *why didn't you when you could?*"

"Because," he said bluntly, "you're too damned young to know your mind."

"Old enough to know you—the way no other woman could. You're a fool. You blunder like a boy. There's nothing about you fine enough for a woman—oh, you'd understand a girl in a saloon. You'd know how to treat one of Belle Paris's tarts—don't scowl at me, you're as coarse, as common as a Kleinfeld. You know drabs."

"I've seen 'em swearing mad anyway——"

"Months I've felt there was something fine in you, something that answered to me straight across the gap, without words. I've looked for gold—well, it's fool's gold, Pemberton. You're Windsor to the core. Low-grade copper."

His eyes had narrowed. Anger seethed in him as it had only once or twice in his life. How did a man kill a woman?

"You're right—once," he said, evenly. "I took you

for a woman. Women don't play a man without they're willing to pay for it. There's one kind that does. That's you. Hell, I'd lift my hat to one of Belle's girls. Yeh, I'm a fool all right."

And just as suddenly as she had flamed into rage, she quieted. She touched his hand. "People always claw at each other. No wonder. But it wasn't in the stars for us, my dear. It isn't, wasn't, couldn't have been. And it's too bad. For you're a *man* and I'm—well, I'm someone a man has loved, for a week or two."

He had been flicked too hard in the raw. He reached his arms for her savagely. She stepped away and called on her voice to quiet him.

"So there's no sense in torturing each other. I'll take that trip to Omaha Milnor's been urging—out of his terror of you. And you'll go back to making copper——"

"After today? God himself couldn't keep me away from you."

"It's what you're for. It's a man's life, a *man's* life. We missed our moment, my dear, and the rest would be cheap. Marry and be greasy at table? Or huddle a backstairs affair out of sight of Milnor? Not you and I—not now. . . . Pemberton, if my damned eyes give out and cry, promise you'll stand me head first in the water. Positively—if I cry."

Well away from him, she twisted the glinting copper of her hair into a braid that wound low over her forehead. The creek pounded against its stones. A kingfisher swerved between them.

"Besides. . . . I've an idea we're in love with each other, my dear. And if we are, if *you* are—it mustn't be. Even if it must, I know the best of love is

not having it. But it mustn't be. It mustn't. Not you. Not now."

She turned to her horse and climbed tranquilly into the saddle. "Please don't follow me for anyway ten minutes, Pemberton. Please."

She called back, over her shoulder. "I'm not crying."

Some weeks later, Elizabeth's horse went lame while she was loping along the foothills. She had ridden the horse much, of late—alone and far from observation. She took it to the veterinary and then rode homeward on one of Kleinfeld's trolley-cars. At the corner she met Will Cartright's wife, exquisitely feminine under a Japanese parasol, who looked at her and was astonished.

"Have you been riding?" Rhoda asked.

"I left the horse at the vet's. Bones like rubber. He limped."

"My dear, have you been through town?"

"Of course."

"Well, I suppose it's all in the point of view—some women would think——"

Elizabeth looked inquiring. The daughter of Tom Whitaker let her eyes fall on Elizabeth's habit. The long full coat swept to the top of the shiny boots, but it was obvious that Elizabeth Allison had knees, that she clad them in effective silk, and that they proceeded from thighs whose roundness the riding breeches tightly caressed.

Elizabeth went hard. The damned impertinence of Windsor's best—if it didn't stop, soon!

"Legs," she said grimly, "are nothing to keep from the public unless they're damaged. You must be deformed, Rhoda. Are you? Let's see."

She stooped quickly, caught in her hands the half-

dozen petticoats that guaranteed the secrecy of Rhoda Cartright's knees, and hoisted them as high as she could. In the brilliance of May sunlight, Rhoda Cart-right was proved a biped. She screamed and caught at her skirts. A freckled upstart driving a butcher's cart yelled his approval from the street.

Elizabeth said tranquilly, "Rather fat, though there's no need to hide them. I'm relieved. But cotton, Rhoda, cotton! What a barrier to a husband's affection."

She felt better and strode on toward home. Milnor was rising from luncheon. He followed her with a sheaf of folded papers.

"What on earth are you getting now? I've paid freight on dozens of crates——"

"You needn't have."

"What *is* it, Elizabeth?"

"Since you want to know, furniture."

"Furniture?"

"For my house."

In the window seat, she nursed one tailored knee in her arms and smiled at him. "You only look preposterous when you get red. Preposterous, my brother, and you're getting decidedly fat. There's just exactly no need at all to say anything except that you're glad to get rid of me. And I should think you've got reason to be."

"You did mean it," he whispered, really stricken. "In spite of all I can say—why, people will wonder which one of us is mad."

He did not look so much angry as dismayed. "An unmarried woman, a gentlewoman, living by herself, Elizabeth, what *is* behind it?"

"Milnor, my dear brother, if you don't go away

you're going to have the still more staggering experience of observing an unmarried gentlewoman undress. No—disrobe, isn't it? Oh, I don't know, Milnor—I wish I did. It's——" she pulled off a boot and hurled it toward the closet. "It's—oh, hang it—I'm all thumbs here. You disapprove. Mrs. Milnor disapproves. I'm always sticking pins in your tenderest prejudices. I'm no sister of yours. I'm only——" she kicked a chair cushion with her stockinged foot, rubbed the bruise violently—"only a damned disappointed spinster who swears and shows her legs. I want to get away from you and I'm going to do it. There's no hard feelings, Milnor, there's no resentment, no mystery. Only, it isn't nice to laugh at you to your face and I always do. So I'm going to move, and if you say one word—well, how much of my money have you been using at the bank?"

His troubled face lightened, perceptibly. It was so *blamed* honest and concerned and fraternally protective! "I suppose I am," he said. "You've always been so—un—un——"

"——unintelligible——"

"But if that's all——"

"It is. You can lie in the grass with a gun to——"

He craned forward, agonized, dreading a frankness he longed for.

"——to shoot the neighbors who disapprove of me." She ripped open the buttons of her blouse and, smiling scorn at him, made to pull it off. He left quickly.

The blouse off, Elizabeth stood midway of three mirrors, grave in her appraisal. She studied the shoulders, the back, the breast that were revealed above satin that faithfully told what it concealed.

She met her eyes, gray-shadowed, resolute, unsmiling. "Liar," she said audibly. Suddenly she jerked open a drawer and pressed the spring of an ornate and heavy box. It held a massive comb, fashioned of copper.

It was, she told herself, something that would go well with a squaw's blanket. Perhaps she should throw over those memorable shoulders the rug in the butler's pantry. Then she might try vermilion on her cheeks, and a broad white stripe where Pemberton Abbey wore his vertical crest. The comb fitted such things. Nevertheless, she wore it in her hair while she dressed.

At the Porphyry, the brothers Allison sat with Pemberton and watched the night traffic on Harney Street, dim under arcs, and with it a dark mass that covered the steps of the Windsor National, across the street, and trailed out in little knots along the sidewalk. Inside the Windsor National, lights whittled circles in the gloom. Figures crossing through them were headless monstrosities. A patch of white in the largest window was pasteboard covering the place where a stone had gone.

John Gale, beside Pemberton, was only curious. The pangs of Windsor finance mattered no more to him than another page of his book, except as they meant something to the Abbey destiny. And Pemberton's grin meant a relaxed, serene enjoyment of Tom Whitaker's pangs.

"Is it fun?" Gale asked, a bit acidly.

"Only prophecy, John. I gave him warning, and he'd laugh his belt off if it was him had a knife in me."

"The run is luck, though," Hobart said.

"Yeh, it's luck to catch him short in cash when he's long on paper and us after him and Herman out of town. Nobody counted on it, but it won't hurt any."

"Herman will get back tonight?"

"If wires and railways and horses can bring him. You're not all that's askin' that, John. Right across the street now Tom's sweatin' into two barrels at once and asking God o hold the sun back till Herman gets here." Pemberton twisted a cigarette. Palms cupped the blaze of a match over his face. "Yah! that paunch of his—it's half dropsy, and Tom was a gunman once. Well, he's through the ice now and none of his gang with guts enough to throw a rope. Herman better get back! The boys don't dare help Tom out without the old man says yes, and ten o'clock tomorrow that crowd on the steps'll reach past the city hall and halfway to the river. And Tom without a cent for 'em."

"How can you be so sure?"

Pemberton waved a hand toward the brothers Allison. "The boys know. They got a line right to the cashier's office—my God, John, is there anybody in Windsor don't like to make an honest dollar on the side? Hobart and Milnor, they pay for what they get. Got a man right now outside Tom's door to tell us if Herman gets here.

"Yeh," he went on, "the Allison boys know their way round. Tell him how to make a run on a bank, Hobart."

Hobart, his Sweet Caporal aromatic, nodded at his brother. "Milnor's honor. He whispers in the right places, calls a loan or two ostentatiously, puts a panic in a few breasts. But really, Mr. Gale, the run is a happy accident. Incidental, you understand, and Tom

will wiggle out of it if Kleinfeld sees him through the morning with cash. Our real effort was the canning factories."

"Three of 'em," Pemberton held up three massive fingers. "We took 'em away from him. That's where he's hurt for good. That's what he gets for going after the Abbey process. That's why he's sweatin blood into his wastebasket. And if Tom Whitaker ain't telling himself right now that he's had enough copper—I don't know Tom and he'll need another lesson."

They were all so calm, these three buccaneers! They sat there and were jovially serene about the spoliation of Tom Whitaker. Tom Whitaker, who had once clad himself in silk hat and flowered vest and faced a hardier generation across green baize. Who had, so the tale said, looked casually along the sights of his Colt's and sent his man, at least once, to the legendary destiny of Western gamblers. Who had felt a strange fever in his blood and had aspired to honors and safety, who had gone down into the marketplace for votes, who had sat his six years among the great. Who had never learned his Abbeys.

"Come sign some papers while you're here, John."

Pemberton led him to a private office where a green shaded light cut off their heads to the likeness of Tom's agitated clerks. He flung open a drawer and brought to view a dispatch box half-full of papers.

"Here's a deed to my house," he said. "And here's stock in Herman's bank. Turn it into Windsor National, after the excitement dies down—for Tom's really on better ground than the Dutchman. Now——"

"What's it for?"

"John, they're after me like fire after an oil-barrel. How do I know they won't get me? They won't, but how do I know someone won't take a shot after me some day? Some have, you know. Or suppose I step off the top level at the mine? Hell, something's got to take care of the kid. That'll give him a house and clothes and send him to school. It ain't much—but it covers the chance."

Gale signed what was to be signed and, under the focussed light, they fell to talking of the years that were over. It was an auspicious moment; Pemberton was reminiscent. Yarn led to yarn, while Gale smoked and more of the hidden years of Pemberton Abbey unfolded to him. Bars filled with men drinking down defeat. The shafts of Leadville and Helena stank and sweated. Blonde girls laid out their detractors with beer bottles. Dennis Hartigan laid hands upon Joe Colletti, who sank a pick nine inches into the skull of Dennis Hartigan. Llewellyn Jones was in bed with Nora Doyle when Marty Doyle reeled home; Marty cried himself to sleep in a corner while Nora and Llewellyn discussed him, but the next day in the stamp-house, a scream was shrill above the crushing of ore, dampness showed for a moment on the hopper, and the cap which rolled off the bars thereof was Llewellyn Jones's. Dynamite, four hundred pounds of it, rode in the bucket at the Sunrise Queen, and a man who rode it nodded his head, though the nod took him to the noose, while another held his hand on the dump lever ten levels above the bottom. A man, who might have had a cleft between his eyebrows, pushed himself by night through dry weeds on his stomach; a Colt's was slung in a holster at his shoulder; behind him, oh, he thought perhaps fifty

feet, though nothing was blacker than the night, he heard dry weeds crackling just perceptibly——

The door opened. "Herman got here," Hobart announced. "It's two-forty. I'm going home."

"Made it, huh? Hell, we can go, John. Tom won't shoot himself tonight."

Too little of the night was left for sleep. They found meat and wine at Gale's, where they sprawled in the library drowsy with tobacco. Gale was moved to jump up and plant himself ferociously on the rug, holding aloft a thin finger.

"One," he said.

Pemberton glanced about the room. "You orderin' a beer, John?"

"You wouldn't understand, Pemberton—it's a book. I mean Whitaker."

"Oh, him. No, Tom won't bother me now. He'll howl and drop his sail when I cough. Herman, neither, I guess—unless he finds out some one's got me on the run. Herman has got into stealin' Oregon timberlands from the Government. It keeps him busy."

A faint distress stirred in John Gale. It was the hour when the soul shrank and whimpered. This was the time when sick men chose to die, when the last hold crumbled and lives merged into darkness—how should any man keep his shoulders square? Pulses flagged, eyes blurred, fingers slackened. From all outside fears walked in and sat down before you.

"Ever see a man after half a hill fell on him, John? Not so nice. That's what Tom'll look like if he steps in front of copper once more. Oh, me too, if I ain't wise enough to pick my own way. It's eat dog or let

dog eat you—and God damn the man up to his guts forever in hell fire that can't take it."

"Just how—" Gale shuddered at the possibility—when the sun had created itself might the sun be quenched?—"just how, would they—Pemberton, if I'm trustee of Gordon, what's on your mind?"

"Copper. It's past Windsor now, John, and it's past the State. To run my mine I've gone East for money. Well, they ain't boys. Mine ain't all the copper in the world. If they could rob me there'd be a trust, a copper trust. If they can't maybe some day I'll be the trust. If I can stand 'em off four—three years—nobody heads me ever again. If I don't—she's gone over to the East, John, copper and all the rest. And that means——"

"That means that the slavery of Windsor won't be even a native slavery. The blood of a State will be sucked by reptiles that don't even live here. I can't reconcile myself to a monster, Pemberton—to a corporation that serenely erects itself on the bodies and souls of men. I tell you, the great beasts of the Apocalypse are come when you can buy or sell men by whole generations."

"Yah! Generations of boobs."

The wan and impotent night. Blood ran but sluggishly in the veins, a half-hour short of dawn. Gale felt himself alone and cold, intolerably cold.

"Can you do it?"

"I wouldn't try if I couldn't. But only a fool's sure. They could get me through the bank. God! A man can't be his own mine, his own smelter, his own bank."

"Then it's the Allisons . . . and if a tick can sting a grizzly bear to death. . . ."

Pemberton spat and relaxed. "Show a man, or two

men, plain proof they'll own the whole world in four years. No, they're safe. Oh, they could kick a block out from underneath and bring the house down—if they were fools enough. God! If I was the man I ought to be I'd done it all alone, bank and all. If God was a friend of mine, he'd fixed me to do without sleeping. But they won't. They know too damn well—they ain't fools, John. Bring the house down on me and they'll be underneath——”

“Samson.”

“Yeh? Well, I never trusted anyone yet I didn't hold a gun on.”

“Pemberton, what would you do? If, *if?*”

Gale could have hidden a forefinger in the cleft between his eyes, the Abbey crest. “Would I lose a minute? There's water power left. I'd have every site in the Rocky Mountains within five years. Yes, and by God, I'd be dictating terms to copper if I did. I will yet, when I'm on top with copper. Copper gets them one way or another anyway. Copper goes out and drives them in—one more set of leg-irons on the State.”

He gulped his port. “For God's sake, John, don't talk about it. Have I got another fight in me? I'm growing old.”

“You're short of forty.”

“And damn near dead. Up from hard-rock again, John? No, I guess not. I don't want to sit in on that one.”

He sprawled on the rug, and the bitterness in Gale's heart, the icy fear, closed tight and tangible.

“Get up and walk,” he growled. “You in repose? You're right. You're dying. On your feet and walk, I tell you!”

"Hell!" Pemberton's voice was calm, contemptuous. "You've got me licked. Ask Whitaker! Copper—John, I've made copper, I've *made* it."

"Why does your voice warm to the word? You speak of copper as though it were a woman."

"Well, it ain't. You know what you're working with—with copper."

But something accursed was written on his face. Gale looked at Pemberton Abbey, his friend, his one friend, who alone had reality in all the years of the West, and looking, he could not trust his eyes, nor his heart. The Abbeyes were fire, the pure, the living element—and fire burned in Pemberton as steadily as it had through all these years. But he was cursed, and he was damned. He had created a new power, he had multiplied power upon the earth. And it had—what had it done to him? What *had* it done? Gale's mind strained against a steel and shining barrier. Some day, when God's wisdom was his, he would understand how a free man was free. Pemberton Abbey, free man, the one free man—shackled to the rock, and in hell.

Faint dawn seeped in from behind the curtains and dulled the lamps. But it seemed to John Gale that the room had grown darker and that the face, the future, the heart of Pemberton Abbey were hidden in the murk.

All the next day and well into the night, he was at the bank, figuring, studying, consulting, writing and reading scores of telegrams. At dinner time, when the shift would be done at the mines, he directed the

operator to get Jeff Farrand on the wire, and at last heard the dry, bitter voice of his engineer.

"Nothin' happening," Jeff said. "What in hell do you expect? Mord Krug to come up and kiss me, maybe, or me to take out a shovelful of diamonds? I hear there's plenty copper left. You better go get drunk, Pemberton, or take a physic. Best you come back here and leave your beard grow."

He was done at ten, closed his office, and went out by the alley behind the bank. He was restless. Angry. Angry at something unseen, unphraseable. His veins ran with loathing of the sprawling city. Hell! No place for a man. No place for a man with arms and fists, with guts, with a lust for rock. He wanted to be back at the mine. The mine—that was it . . . but, damned if it was.

He remembered that he had not eaten since noon. He went into Schmidt's where a waiter awoke from a doze and shuffled forward. Trout swam in a tank in the window. They always had, ever since he could remember. There had always been a Schmidt's, father or son.

He solaced himself with steak and beer. But he was still restless when he went outside. He telephoned to the railroad to ask if anything would go over the spur. Not, he found, till the five o'clock freight in the morning. He shuffled and swore. A man needed a saloon, hairy men, whisky. A man needed something to feed on between strains. . . . Before he could admit to himself what he was doing, he was on his way. He stopped in the deep shadow of a box-elder before a darkened house. Everybody asleep. Would he, he wondered, would he have swallowed the last humiliation and gone in? Suddenly he was on fire,

thinking of her sleeping in her bed. Her hair tumbled about the pillow and her breast arched.

Back to the mine in the morning—not to trust himself from it again till he was a man, a self-governed man. Why, he would not have trusted himself—from what depths did these lightnings rise? He would pack his grip, glance at the sleeping Gordon, and be ready for the train. But how get through the night? Well, Gale had been waked often enough before this.

The hedge that enclosed the cottage and Gale's house had been planted ten years before. It was tall and thick, but never before had it been mysterious. Now, as he turned in through the gap, a hand reached out from it to stop him. Automatically he sprang at it—but he met only a dark cloak and a yielding softness. He dragged her free from the hedge.

"Elizabeth!"

"No, of course you didn't hurt me. But, Pemberton, who taught you gentleness?"

"In God's name——"

"Because I couldn't sleep. Because we're two fools. Because you think you can run from anything you're afraid of—and I know better. Oh, don't talk, don't talk to me at all! I'm all nerves. I'm a bent spring. Walk me for miles or I'll fly all to pieces."

They passed under the last wan arc, into the empty hills. Suddenly, she was at ease. Under the sky, through scents of early May, they trod the soft earth, Elizabeth chatting as she would at a tea. Pemberton was silent. He wanted to say nothing, wanted to do nothing. He looked uneasily at the peaks, behind which dawn would too soon come to end this strangeness. He was awed and subdued. There was no longer any sense of dread or regret. . . . After a

while her voice ebbed. They walked on, steadily, unhurriedly, as though some grave necessity lay ahead. The bare hills softened with willows and lush grass. A wind murmurous among the scrub-oaks of the peaks brought a scent of water and mint and violets.

"I'd give a smelter if I'd never seen you," he said abruptly, quite against his will.

Elizabeth stood still, between steps, and faced him. Her cheeks and her hands were pale splotches; she was, for the rest, invisible. "Do you know why?" she said evenly. "You do, of course—but do you dare say why?"

"I'm afraid of you."

He heard her sigh, as terribly as if she had been reprieved from death. "Then I can? I can, Pember-ton? You confess I can?"

"What?"

"Don't lie. I can come between you and copper. I can change the value of what you've spent your life at."

"You've done it already."

He wanted to strangle her with his fingers. He was aware that he had confessed intolerable shame. He would not have told John Gale—and anyone else he would have beaten to jelly with his fists. He would have rejoiced to kill her, who had, alone of all the world, stormed a way into the fortress of his soul. . . . All at once he was quiet. Serene, a peace that made his shame seem insignificant.

"Take it and be damned," he said. "I've said it. You've won. I'll take you home, now."

"Won?" she said—and he perceived that she was trembling. "Who's won? Nobody's won—we've both lost." She walked slowly toward him, three

steps, into his arms. She drew his face down to meet hers. "Does it matter? We've both lost. I can't think it matters. I can't, Pemberton. . . . Will you throw me away, now?"

A momentary bitterness possessed her. "Like a drunken gipsy in a ditch. Not even a decent roof and bed. But that's your way, Pemberton. . . . I wouldn't have had it otherwise. . . . I'm proud."

He sat beside her while she yielded, for a moment, to tears. His hand, like scarred zinc, caught soft strands of her hair.

"Why are you crying, Elizabeth?"

She caught the uncouth hand in hers. "Where did you learn to be gentle? I've wondered, always. . . . My dear, one does cry when one's virginity is gone forever and a day."

She laughed, gently. The night changed, darkness turning toward the ebb, so that he could just see her face. It was a laughter of deep, fulfilled joy. He sprang to his feet, when she put out a hand to rise. She leaned against him, flung passionate arms about him.

"Elizabeth Allison comes into her own," she said. "A profligate woman fitly taken. Oh, my dear, my dear, you're such a fool!"

The east was perceptibly gray. "Lift me in your arms. Carry me for a way, will you, Pemberton?"

He swung her off the ground, her arms locked behind his head, and strode off across the hills. He felt himself a giant—grown young, grown young and invincible, the Pemberton Abbey of the old days. Her arms tightened and she held her cheek to his.

"I've a house of my own now. You didn't know that, did you? All the way across town——"

"I stood for half an hour in front of Milnor's to-night——"

"My dear! Alone in the darkness, hating a room that didn't even have me in it!"

Laughter rose like a mountain spring from immense depths. Laughter that had the warmth of the earth in it.

"You'll come to my house now, when you come from the mine. Straight from the train to my house. I'll be waiting for you—Pemberton, Pemberton! By night I sought him, whom my soul loveth. But I found him. I found you. And now look at us."

He strode on across the hills. The east reddened. He looked down at her.

Elizabeth lingered at the window, loath to forsake the fragrance and the languor. The last light shivered a scarlet lance against the tip of Mount Paul. It lingered, faded, was rubbed out. At once, in the same place something smouldered and grew bright—some one who had climbed the peak was cooking his supper. At hand, the children of her neighbors were noisy in the street. "Bushel of wheat, bushel of barley, them who ain't ready holler Charley."

Elizabeth flung out her arms. Almost, by now, almost—yes, as she listened for it, there was a whistle in the west, hoarse and faint and poignant. Whistle for the crossings—whistle for the crossings, a white board with an X painted on it. Two other women, at least two other women listening for it. For the engineer would have a wife, and the fireman—did the freights from Abbey have more than two men? Two men coming home to steak and biscuits. And one coming home—to me.

Her hand brushed across a lilac. She swung the window open again to reach for the last flower, held it to her cheek, and slowly went upstairs. Sudden energy set her going happily through drawers and closets. Such a marvel of gray silk! It was affectionate, it loved her hair, her shoulders. She laid it smoothly on a chair, set stockings and slippers beside it, and laughed, seeing a woman grotesquely outlined. She knew she was profligate and damned, for she loved

to bathe. A huge towel, rough as a wash-board, whipped her skin to delight. She stood quiet in the center of the room. She was real, real, *real*. Her hands explored her skin—ran the length of her legs, caressed her forehead. Snapping on the lights that flanked the long mirror, she stood before it to comprehend the full wonder of herself.

Tall. Slender. I am lovely, I am lovely and desired. Her waist, slim, a cry of beauty. Her breasts, firm, rounded—to catch that ecstasy of line sculptors had harried themselves to the grave. The lilac of the window lay on the table. She crushed a handful of the petals, breathed in the moist fragrance, rubbed it in the hollow between her breasts. Where his head would lie. How a woman's—how Elizabeth's—breasts arched upward! Aspiring. No—impudent!

Impudent. She smiled—and she was tingling with a joy that ran along her nerves as tangibly as warmth. She was giddy with pleasure. To be alive, to *be*, was to be drunk with joy. . . . She began to dress, her very fingers singing. At last the affectionate gray silk was molded to her, and her hair, fine copper, was intricately coiled. She pinned the last slip of lilac at her breast, with a cameo Pemberton had, somehow, remembered to find for her in Chicago. She lingered, still quietly on fire, to approve herself in the long mirror.

"Impudent," she whispered. "Lovely—impudent—and loved. So few women are desired. So few women have lovers, my dear. So very few have lovers who are men."

Her thoughts followed him from the train to his cottage, belated supper with Venice, a few minutes talking to his son. Would Elizabeth ever bear him

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a child? She did not know. Between them was no future at all, only now, only a star that crossed illimitable sky where there was no time.

She heard him outside, calling good-night. A rig drove away. She was at the door, strength gone out of her, quite nerveless in his arms. They came into the lighted room. What serenity flowed beneath the assurance of chatter, and beneath that what riotous joy!

He said, after a while, "I'm hungrier'n hell."

"You didn't eat with Venice?"

"Waste time getting here? Not a chance."

She led him to her kitchen and busied herself at the icebox. Frilly things on the table; green plates; glasses of amber and blue—Pemberton shook his head at them.

"I've only two wines in the house. What will you have, *Château la Rose* or *Brauniberger*?"

"You say it. You and John. You don't learn wines in a copper mine."

"All things considered——" she studied the plates—"the claret would be best."

"Ice it?"

"Claret? Never, my dear. The temperature of an April morning."

He ate, enormously at ease. She leaned against the gas range, happy in his presence. "My cook is clever, don't you think?"

Pemberton grinned. "Woman's food. My Lord, I never thought they'd tame me to salads. Salad and sandwiches and wine—is there a ruffle on my shirt?"

"I had her make that aspic before I sent her home—and anyone can make sandwiches. It's not hard-

rock food but it won't make a lady of you. And it's my kitchen you're eating it in—the last refinement of unholy love, domesticity. You should be in your shirt-sleeves. The dreadful Abbey at ease with his sweetheart, the millionaire in the kitchen—are you, a millionaire, Pemberton?"

"Fifty times over when I get clear with the mine. Or else—just a bum."

"Who drove you here?"

"Hobart."

She stood up. "Oh!"

"Yes."

"Pemberton . . . tell me!"

"Proud of that horse. Saw me at a crossing and picked me up. Asked me where I was going. I told him, here."

"Oh. Just that. . . . One's family are supposed to find out last of all——"

"Probably are last."

"Yes. If there's a tongue in the whole city—but Hobart. It takes one's breath. My dear, my dear! It's a strange—it's a sobering, an amusing thought that I'm a scarlet woman to thousands of honest folk. Burghers. Righteously abhorring me——"

"Ashamed, Elizabeth?"

"I'd flaunt it from the flag pole at the Court House—in the Herald—in all public places by statute duly designated. But Hobart!—Pemberton, what did he say? How did he act?"

"Acted like he was settin' me down at the door of the bank. What could he say?"

"It's just possible he has no suspicion——"

"Hobart's grown up."

"And a gentleman. But still, his sister. I am, though you've never seemed to realize it."

"You're one-third owner of the Allison estate, too. Means something to Hobart. And if that's not enough—well, what can a man say to a man who's got that whole damn estate in his pocket?"

Her lower lip caught between her teeth. She was extraordinarily grave. "Acquiescence, then, because he's a gentleman. Or because he's a business man. Hobart will. He's a man of the world, after all. It's nothing to him. But Milnor—he's different—" she stood before Pemberton's chair, her hands on his shoulders. "It's certain Milnor doesn't know, or he'd have been after me with Bibles and hymn-books. Or, conceivably, after you with a pistol. Milnor's a fool—oh, he's shrewd, he's a money-maker, but he's been a baby all his life. . . . It occurs to me that Hobart knows him well enough not to tell—for business reasons—and that it's wise not to let him know."

"Hell!" Pemberton stood up and took her in his arms. Their heads were one shadow. "Walk up to Milnor and look him in the eye and tell him to smile."

They went back to shaded lights and subtle hangings. Elizabeth, at his side, held his arm tightly. "That's you—but what is it? I've discovered that I'm impudence—and oh, Pemberton, such delightful other things—I'm lovely and slender, beautiful, desirable, but mostly impudent. And you're—what are you? You're arrogance. Arrogance and impudence—what chance has Milnor?"

"Milnor," he said, "is dead, deader than hell. I don't know him—never heard of him. Two weeks I haven't seen you, Elizabeth. I've got to thinking it

was Wednesday noon at the mine forever, with the whistle blowing as long as hell could last."

She possessed him with her eyes. "Yes?"

"Elizabeth! Elizabeth!" His hands reached for her. She came into his arms. "I never knew before, I could like to say a name."

The door-bell rang. "Yes," he said, energized. "I told him to bring it here—and about now. You run up and get a coat or something, and come outside. I've got a present for you."

It was an automobile, an awkward shape set high above narrow wheels. Elizabeth cried out with mirth and pleasure, Pemberton labored with a crank which projected from its side till bellows started under the floor and the whole machine shook throughout its length. He climbed in beside Elizabeth, seized the wheel that stood up straight in front, and began to manipulate levers and pedals. Twice it settled back, after great noise, and he must climb out to renew his cranking: then, subdued to a nearly metrical coughing, the machine slowly got under way. They moved off down the street. The motion was smooth and effortless.

"Here," he said, "this is the reins. Turn it round the corner. Not so quick. That's it. Tomorrow I'll teach you to drive."

"Is it mine?"

"It's yours. We got to get off this street. Pity the horse that sees it coming. I tell you it's hard on horses."

"How did you learn to drive?"

"Jeff's got one at the smelter—can't hardly get him up to the mine these days. Runs it up and down the sagebrush. He can take it apart blindfolded, like a

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kid with the family shotgun. Jeff's nutty about it—says they'll go anywhere in five years. Tried his hand gearing the engine to the axle direct. Had to get a new axle."

They rode less comfortably on the back street, but the excitement of twelve miles an hour lingered. Three miles, four miles. They were out of Windsor now and the road was bumpy. They swayed and bounced, but the car chugged manfully on through the cool scent of fields, now in the shadow of orchards, now under the empty sky, its oil-lights a faint shine on the flowing ground. But after a bump that threw them together and then apart, the engine coughed, sputtered, and went dead. Pemberton was out and under. She heard his knuckles tapping metal. He emerged again, and meditatively shouldered the car off the road.

"Hear that?" She listened and made out a faint dripping. "Gasoline line. Broken at the gasket on that last bump. We'll have to walk home—I'll send a team for it in the morning. It's nothing much—but of course I'd have to bust a present I'm making you."

"It's a lovely place to bust it, anyway." She pointed to the thickets of wild roses beside the fence at the roadside. When she shook the bush, petals showered down upon her and caught in her hair. "Who wouldn't be glad to walk on a June night?"

It was a long, leisurely stroll, arm in arm. The peaks were at hand. Farm dogs barked a sleepy recognition of their passing. The darkness was bland, almost tender. There was much to laugh over, not so much mirthfully as companionably, from the sustained knowledge of each other. He cut walking sticks from a mountain ash, spoke of constellations whose names he had learned at the Sunrise Queen and by whose

light he had guided himself crawling on his belly, making his surveys. He carried her in his arms, many times. . . . They came into her street, up the walk to her door, and there he paused. She fitted a key, swung the door open—but he made no move to go in. Pride and love surged up in her. Where on the earth was there another man who would not have crossed that threshold uninvited? But not Pemberton—not this strange derivative of the saloons and the acid sheds. He was her lover but he had no rights. To him, intuitively and inevitably, she was a free woman and he could enter her house only by her favor. Her eyes stung with tears for him—for his tenderness, for his humility.

“Will you come in, my dear?” she whispered.

The door latched behind them. “Say that you love me with all your heart. Say that you love me utterly and completely. Tell me your hand has curved in memory of my breast.”

He had her hands. “What do you think? Elizabeth!”

“After me like dogs after a cougar,” he had told John Gale. They were. Abbey Copper had rushed into Eastern finance like a meteor, and Eastern financiers had heard that diamonds might be dug from meteors. While Pemberton Abbey had his own mine the young copper trust would remain a farce. Beating them away from it with a club was this uncouth colossus from the West, who never slept, who never tired, who was all things in all places at one time. Pictures of him broke out in the press. His name rose on the froth of Senate debates. New York bankers met with manipulators who had met with the heirs

of great mines who had met with heirs of older fortunes. The lines formed. But Pemberton's was the inside line—and it was firm. Month by month there were raids and assaults: month by month they collapsed.

It was the highest phase of Pemberton Abbey. It stretched out month by month, effort which concentrated in a sustained crescendo all the power of the Abbey soul. Power that John Gale, that Elizabeth Allison, that all the onlookers and participants beheld uncomprehendingly. Was there no limit to Pemberton Abbey? None, it appeared, none at all. Pemberton was not a well: he was a spring, issuing from the earth, inexhaustible. . . . He was in Denver, San Francisco, New York, Butte, Salt Lake City, Chicago. He was at the mine, the smelters, the bank. Battalions sprang into being for him to direct. Other battalions rose about his path. Beggars, gamblers, adventurers, astrologists, spiritualists, blackmailers gathered to him in nodes like filings about a magnet. The skirmish lines of his opponents broke about him like ripples at a rock; they re-formed and advanced again. But the months passed and he was untouched. And every month survived added a regiment to his supports. For, though he must fight the buccaneers of money, his central fight was against time. Time, the immutable: if conquered, then his ally; if not, then his destroyer.

He went through these months renewed. Bringing to bear the last tendon of his will—willing to hold—willing to destroy. It was function—the justification of the Abbey soul before the Abbey God. He felt eternal.

How far might a man see into the forbidden future?

How much might a man read of the determined page? John Gale wondered. Elizabeth wondered. Pemberton wondered not at all, but went about his business. When the wave comes, ride on its crest. That was all. Power of the earth, power of the tides—he was one with them, a conduit for them, the copper core along which the world's current ran.

He saw the future, however, in two deaths. They did not touch each other, but they touched the destiny of Abbey Copper at its heart. . . .

Pemberton waited in his office at the Porphyry Bank till Herman Kleinfeld wheezed into it, carefully late for the appointment. Wheezed! Why, the Dutchman was a walking case of asthma. Pemberton looked amazedly at the great man of Windsor and saw that he was old. Beneath his eyes were bloated pouches criss-crossed with purple veins: a wattle quivered in folds beneath his third chin: his pendulous belly had swelled far beyond its old corpulence. When he sat on the edge of a chair, wheezes and snorts broke from him and a pulse fluttered in the wattle. Old, corrupt, evil!

"What did you want, Pemberton?" Herman asked.

Pemberton turned easily from the half-pitying amazement of his discovery. He wasted no sympathy on age. "You're making a good thing out of Oregon timber lands, Herman."

"Not me. There is money in them—millions now, billions tomorrow. But I'm too late. I didn't have no money to spare when the time was ripe."

"Yeh?"

"You want in it? Maybe I could go in with you now, if you got good. You want I should look into it?"

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"No. Listen, Herman. I told you once I'd bust you open if you tried to cut in on the mine. Maybe you don't call the Hollingsworth Contract Company cutting in. Been hiring my laborers and running my commissary for me and now it's trying to get my coal orders. Don't lie like a swine, Herman. You're the Hollingsworth Contract Company."

"Well, then, you said I am. What about it?"

"You get out. I run this alone—no Windsor pin sticking in my pants. Get out now."

"Bust a good contract and lose money? Talk sense."

"All right." Pemberton jerked open a drawer and from it produced dozens of large envelopes. "Here's sense. You damn fool—all your life you been giving up rolling dollars on their edge to swipe pennies out of some one's pocket. What do you want trying to screw contract business out of copper when you're sewin' up all you got in timber lands? Look here. I've got the whole thing. I'll say you ain't a piker in timber, Herman. Nobody else in the game ever got into the Treasury for what you've got. Thousands of acres, thousands and thousands. And every bit of it stole from the Government."

"You talk like a fool, Pemberton. Always you have talked like a fool."

"Yeh? I've got pictures of contracts, pictures of ledgers, pictures of minutes and memorandums and resolutions. I got pictures of every step you've taken. I've got plenty of the steps themselves. I've got cancelled checks. Yes, and I've got witnesses—it ain't hard to buy a man on your payroll. Remember Farnsworth? God!—and you'll die in Leavenworth and the Government'll sell out the shoes of your grand-

kids. . . . Well, what about the Contract Company?"

"I'll get out," Herman said at once.

He had turned to jelly in the chair. His purplish cheeks slowly took the color of dead flesh. . . . Yes, licked—licked, by God! The Terrible Kleinfeld. Pemberton wondered, dispassionately, whether the Dutchman was going to die where he was sitting.

"Better believe me, all right," he said. "Look if you want."

Herman wheezed erect and stood supporting himself by the chair. "You will give all that stuff to me when I pull out and leave you alone? We ain't any of us saints, Pemberton, and us rich men, we stick together, eh?"

"Give, hell! What would I have the next time you wanted to chase a penny out of my backyard? I'm holdin' on, and I'll tell you square, Herman, I may use it anyway. Minute I get the idea there ain't room for us both. Stick together—there's only one way you stick to anybody. Only one way you ever have, you Goddamn leech."

When the old man had wheezed out of the office, Pemberton sat staring at his evidence. Keep it or use it, keep it or use it? One blow from behind, be it never so faint, and Abbey Copper would topple plumb into the hands that waited for it. Herman would pull out his Contract Company, but what might he try next? He kept the purchased documents in the Porphyry vaults one month, two months. Then there was a stiffening in the New York rates and, simultaneously at the smelters, Pemberton unearthed an assistant manager who for six months had sent a triplicate of the weekly mill-sheet to Herman Klein-

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feld. He dealt with the manager according to his mood. As for Herman!

Get the son-of-a-bitch stopped for good! Why let a coyote prowl even if the hen-house was locked up? Pemberton was going to New York. He came west by way of Washington. Henry Clay Bryce—an even older man than Herman. The incorruptible. The nation loved its rogues: its incorruptibles it martyred. Years of hate and cursing had left their mark on Bryce; only the old passion lived in him, transcending a body that revolted but obeyed. Pemberton sought him and delivered his packages.

The silver voice was only a croak. "You wouldn't give it to me a year ago. I could have used it, then."

"Can now, Henry, and you know it. Rake 'em all up together and pitch Herman in with the rest."

Bryce lay almost flat in his chair. "Damn the God that won't let me die in quiet. The Philippines have killed me, Abbey. Put it on my tombstone that I killed myself speaking for freedom."

"Don't waste a speech on me. I never use my vote."

"It's the living truth. Have I got strength enough left to make a point of order?"

"You got one more scandal in you, Henry. Get out and save the nation's forests and die noble."

The watery old eyes kindled. The forests! One last lance against corruption. "What do you get out of having Herman stopped?"

"Plenty," said Pemberton.

When he reached St. Louis, the headlines were already riotous. Bryce's accusation that the people had been raped once more, naming names, had turned the wires incandescent. The order of the day, in the

Senate, had been suspended while the incorruptible told his story of the vanishing forests. The Committee was named. Indictments were preparing. Pemberton smiled briefly. Herman Kleinfeld would run no knife into his back, now or forevermore. Like to see the swine wearin' striped panties and eatin' off a shelf. . . . But when he reached Windsor, the Evening Herald had taller headlines on its first page. Overcome by the ignominy of false charges, Herman Kleinfeld had drawn his mantle about him and had died, a martyr to the hatred of the Senator whom Windsor had never been able to unseat.

They were burying him the day after Pemberton arrived. It was his humor to attend the funeral, taking Elizabeth and John Gale in the severest carriage obtainable. Windsor's great man was dead. He had belonged to every lodge, and besides the full enrollment of each, the city entire turned out to stand bareheaded at the grave. The freemasons tossed in their acacia and read their ritual of brotherly love for the dead. The G. A. R. fired their triple volley. And then the thousands walked slowly homeward. Pemberton's carriage pulled into a side street to watch the organizations marching by—banners and fasces, polished axes and nodding plumes, sabres and aprons, lances and zinc hats. . . . Long after the rest had gone, one last carriage emerged, behind high-stepping blacks. A man sat alone in it, a white haired man with a pale, distinguished face.

"Mr. Whitaker stood by the grave," Elizabeth said.

"The one man in Windsor whose eyes are honestly red," Gale said, assenting.

"Yeh, Tom's lost his friend and he's sorry. But

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he'll sleep easier, nights. Never knew when he'd find Herman's knife between his ribs."

Gale shivered. "I'd be distressed among my books tonight. And I've sent Hope to the country. Can't I eat and talk with you two? Will you ask me, Miss Allison—Elizabeth?"

"It must be the three of us tonight. But always Elizabeth, John Gale."

She played for them and sang for them after dinner, not very well, not at all pretentiously—in a mirthful gravity that comprehended their oneness. The man who loved John Gale; the man whom John Gale loved; the woman who loved Pemberton Abbey, whom Pemberton Abbey loved, whom John Gale would love for his friend's sake. The quiet lights were an earnest of friendship. Outside, the city of Windsor worked out its ends and buried its great ones; outside, Abbey Copper whirled toward its solar heat. Inside the house, three friends were together after food.

"His luck held," Pemberton said. "Bryce won't bother to prove up on him now—only confiscate his timber. He won't even get his name blacked—much. And the kids will have their fortunes—for a while. They're at each other's throats in the big house this minute."

"Meanwhile Windsor has a fair start toward a new myth. A Great Man dies. We'll live to see his picture in the schools and a bust of him in the city hall. He has become, tonight, a Builder. The story is an old one already in my history. Mostly, the Founders died at the end of a rope. The Builders die in bed."

"Maybe this one did, but not at home," Pemberton said.

"Eh?"

"The papers had a touching death-bed scene," Elizabeth said.

"Maybe I'll start a paper, sometime, and tell what happens. Hell, it was Saturday night, wasn't it? Where did Herman Kleinfeld spend Saturday night all his life? He fell on his face in one of Belle Paris's cribs, and he was dead before the drab could holler. Belle got there and called a doctor and was all for callin' an undertaker. She gave a damn. But the Doc and a porter carried him out to the Doc's buggy and took him home sittin' up."

They looked at him. John Gale blew a smoke ring which flattened out against Elizabeth's knees. "You should write history, Pemberton, not me."

"They'll remind him in hell I told him to watch out at his age. Seventy years old—the old ram. Ten years anyway he couldn't do more than look——"

Gale glanced apology at Elizabeth.

"Dear John," she said, patting his arm, "I'd so much rather Pemberton didn't temper the word to me."

"So the death of Herman Kleinfeld, Builder, cannot even be given the dignity of shame. Not conscience nor righteous wrath killed him. But only—an old man's——"

"Lechery?" Elizabeth suggested.

"Squalor," Gale finished.

"Or was it?" Pemberton demanded. "Herman pulled through the Saturday before—why couldn't he pull through this one? Well, I killed him."

Gale nodded slowly. Elizabeth only looked at him, her eyes soft and possessive. Pemberton challenged their gaze but found no opposition in it.

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At last, Gale, finding that a word from him seemed obligatory, asked mildly, "Why?"

"No engine," Pemberton said, "no engine goes out to kill a hog that's on the track. It's up to the hog."

Elizabeth kissed her fingertips to him. "Abbey Copper, John. It's in your book that the new energies are creating themselves. Pemberton is an engine for the moment. Haven't I read that the drivers spin when there's blood on the track?"

"That's what the sand-box is for. Hell, we average two a week at the mine. Not so many at the smelters. The lawyers tend to that. Forget it. Herman's shavin' notes in hell and we're done with him. A man that'd walk a mile through hell to rob a man of a dollar or cheat a whore of her pay."

"An epitaph," Elizabeth said.

Mordecai Krug, who had dreaded death all his life, died more decently than Herman Kleinfeld. His passing fluttered more newspapers and had its eddies in the Street.

Hobart said, "What's that going to do to us?"

"Anyway," said Pemberton, "it eases us for a few months while they straighten out the estate. Then . . ."

"Yes?"

"Well, what would you do if you were heir to Krug?"

"Sell."

"They will. To those that want silver. Be a silver trust. Krug never was able to swing it alone. Neither could them that fought him. They can now. And they're copper men. My God, Hobart, when they've

got all the silver in the world, what's to keep 'em from getting all the copper? Only me. The Copper Trust is bein' born. This time it goes. . . . If I don't get there first."

"Can you hang up the estate?"

"Already trying. If there's months enough on our side, we're safe at last. But, will there be?"

Hobart nodded. He seemed to want to say something but changed his mind. He moved toward the door, came back, stood at the table, finally sat down.

"Abbey," he said. His voice was not clear. He coughed violently, but without amending the hoarseness. "Abbey, I'd like to say. . . . There's something—oh, for God's sake be careful."

He could see Pemberton grow dangerous in his chair.

"Spit it out, Hobart."

"How can I—how could any man? Damn it, Abbey, you came home from Omaha along with Elizabeth."

"Yes."

"It has distressed Milnor. He's used to his sister's indiscretions—all her life they've grieved him. He . . . he feels that her natural innocence has never understood the danger of seeming to be indiscreet when you're around. He's warned her several times—you know that. She laughed at him. That's all right, too. She always has. Well—Milnor loathes the—shall I say?—the appearance of evil. He's frantic, now."

"Yeh. Now what?"

Hobart struck a match to light a cigarette. He threw it away, the cigarette following it. "Nobody

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could answer for him if he found out you were with Elizabeth in Omaha."

The room was quiet enough to give Hobart's voice a sharp edge. Pemberton looked him up and down.

"Got anything more to say?"

"I . . . think not."

"Sure?"

"Well, this—what you do and what Elizabeth does, that's not my affair. If we were starting over where we did—I'd see that she never came West. If I could afford the luxury of hating you like hell, I'd probably shoot you. I can't. We're in this up to our ears, both of us, and we can't gratify our desire for heroics. You're necessary to the life of the Allison families. That's all—and that's why I hope you won't see fit to let Milnor find out any different from what his own damn stupidity makes him believe. That's all."

Pemberton grinned. "I like a man that speaks his mind. You've got guts, Hobart——"

"That's the trouble—so has Milnor."

"And I like you. We'll get along."

And a few days later Milnor himself, deeply troubled, came to Pemberton. "Abbey, I've been talking to my sister. She says she wants to go to the mine."

"So she says."

"I beg of you—Abbey, I can speak plainly. You must know what your reputation is. You must know what construction the city puts on any woman's impulse when it concerns you. I—Abbey, I've never been able to control her. I beg you—it's in your power to refuse her this mad idea."

"Gale wants to go, too."

"Unfortunately, that doesn't help."

"Why don't you come, then, you and Mrs. Milnor?"

Milnor was pleased. "That—perhaps that could be arranged."

. . . "Clever," Hobart said.

"Yeh? Elizabeth called it something else."

She had said, "Arrogant!"

Jeff Farrand's bucket line was completed just in time. The estate of Mordecai Krug was tied up with litigation and the embryo Copper Trust, which would never quite be a Trust till it licked Pemberton or fell captive to him, managed to enjoin Abbey Copper from using the Piegan Condor's tracks. But the victory was abortive, for, without the loss of an hour, the ore at the mine was diverted into enormous steel hods which ran up the mountain sides on steel cables and descended to the smelters at Abbey. The bucket line was another Farrand miracle—another benefit of Jeff's inability to understand when engineering principles proved a thing impossible.

"Saves time, saves labor, saves four miles of carriage, save thousands in money now and millions later," Pemberton informed Gale. "But it ain't paid for, and it cost millions. Gad, John, it's like trying to fill the sea with a steam-shovel. See those shovels, scores and scores of them. Every one is shovelin' dollars—my dollars—into a hole that hasn't got a bottom yet. And time's crowdin' me close.

"It's fight for time," he went on. "Kick and slug and bite and gouge—for time to do it in. And it's make copper, make more and more copper till the copper in the right hand column crawls ahead of the red ink in the left-hand one. That's the whole story—that, and have I got time to do it in."

"Pemberton," Gale said diffidently, "I'm too much

of the library to understand all this. I can't make out anything except that it's three years of crisis and everything you are and everything you desire to be hung in the balance. If my money can help you——"

"Run bawling to a friend?"

"In God's name what is a friend for? It's—Pemberton, it's more than friendship. I—I talk badly—I can't phrase it. I've seen in you—I've come to find you the sole proof that life can be—that the will can create itself. I mean—how may one believe that man can defeat the slavery he was born to—seize it and make it do his desire. If a man cannot pay his fortune to keep his belief intact——"

"Drop in the bucket, John. Wouldn't help me more than a nickel helps the minister. And it would make me hate myself. You don't want me doing that. God! if I could only untangle Elizabeth's money from it—oh, hell, wait till I see if our bucket's ready."

He turned away from them abruptly and disappeared in the darkness. Elizabeth, who had listened silently, took Gale's arm.

"You understand him, John."

"None better."

"You understand me."

"Better than that, Elizabeth—I love you. For Pemberton loves you!"

"There's no judging me, then. Not that I thought you would, John."

"Do I judge the tides or the winds? It's the weariest of wisdoms that no judgments hold for love, and it's tragic wisdom that no judgments hold for Pemberton Abbey. He brings the world to be. You must see that, Elizabeth. Pemberton has destroyed a world

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and made a new one—even though it destroys him——”

“Must it, John?”

He shuddered. . . . Pemberton called to them out of the darkness. They found him in a long, open shed, where, in the light of arcs, gigantic steel framework held huge spouts twenty feet above the floor and climbed beyond them into the gloom. The spouts were full of ore which crashed into them from above but their outlets had, for the moment, been closed. The cables of the conveying line were motionless. From two of them hung a basket on rollers and from that, seven feet of steel bucket with a lantern burning at the rim.

Pemberton ran up the ladder and carefully inspected the lantern. “That’s our signal,” he called. “I’ve telephoned them to watch for it on top the divide.”

He helped Elizabeth and Gale up the ladder and into the bucket. Boxes and sacking had been piled in the bottom so that Elizabeth, standing, found her throat level with the rim. The three of them fitted too loosely. Pemberton ordered sheepskin coats brought to cushion them. Then he yelled “Go!” The cables screamed. The shed slid away from them. They swung round like a careening comet. A dip, a lurch, and they were being borne slowly up an enormous incline.

Except for the continued shrieking of the pulleys on the cable, their progress made no sound between the supporting towers—which gave off reports like cannon shots. The motion was a succession of shuttle-like loops from tower to tower. The air above the mountains was icy. Looking back they could see a spattering of arc-lights all over the copper mountain. Be-

tween them there was only a void—and moonlit mountainsides, and faint stars.

They were unimaginably high. "Hold tight," Pemberton cautioned them.

Elizabeth's fingers grasped his. The bucket began to slide downward. Cold air rushed upward about their faces. Gale's hat blew off into space. Then there were no towers. They reached the end of a decline and began to ascend again.

"Crossin' Whitetail gulch by suspension. A thousand feet of air underneath. No towers—only cables. You're standing over a canyon."

Her clutch on his arm was riveted tight. He pointed toward the ridge above them, where more lights outlined another framework.

"They'll switch off there—if they see the lantern. If they don't——"

"What?"

"It's a nice dive into the crusher at Abbey."

She squirmed closer to him. The strength of her hands surprised him. "I wouldn't mind," she gasped. "After this ride—anything on earth, Pemberton. Anything would be fitting."

Their progress through sky and moonlight had the cold necessity of fate; they seemed to be geared to the machinery of the world itself. Nothing could hasten or delay them or affect their isolation. Only the dark bulk of the mountainside was real: the rest was stars and dissolved darkness and the wide barrens of the sky. . . . They clanked into a long shed on top of the ridge. A series of violent jolts threw them into one another's arms. The bucket jerked into a side-track, bumped into a framework prepared for it, and hung swaying. Pemberton vaulted out and reached

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up for Elizabeth. As Gale clambered down, the next bucket slid screeching through the shed and out the farther end.

They went outside. From the ridge they could see a jutting corner of the mine, and, on the other side, the smelters at Abbey. Both were small clusters of lights in the vault-like shadows of the peaks. They seemed, from this height, a cold and passionless phosphorescence in which life had no part. Yet every third minute two tons of ore shrieked through the shed—out of darkness from the phosphorescence of the mine, into darkness toward the phosphorescence of the smelters. It was an automatism, a machine that built itself, ran itself, repaired itself, justified itself. Life had nothing to do with it.

“. . . And yet,” Gale said, “there’s breath and blood out there where the light is. We know, if only because the blood is spilled. You shouldn’t have brought me here—up on a ridge, far off the earth, in moonlight and darkness. The buckets go by like mechanical bats—like tin birds with springs. It’s a clockwork world got out of hand and multiplying like fungi. It’s the worst men ever dreamed or feared—with a race scourged to feed the fires that give it steam. It’s as if a mushroom grew to be a world and germinated fish.”

“No,” Elizabeth said, “it’s merely beautiful.”

She pointed down the mountainside, where the line of steel towers glimmered in the moon. They were slender lances, perfectly spaced, perfectly aligned. It was desire wrought in steel—a will had given itself form and function, substance and design. . . . Above their heads four steel cables swayed across the face of a moon just past the full. It was caught in the

wires that checkered it. The bulk of an ore-bucket swung across and obliterated it. The moon rode free; the bucket banged into the shed. Below them, on the far side, a smelter disgorged a flaming torrent of slag, which, from the ridge, seemed only a faint rose glow at the bottom of a well. . . . On both sides of the range the Abbey Process did the will of Pemberton Abbey.

Gale drew in his breath. It caught. It seemed to wheeze out of him. "Poison lovelier than God. . . . Elizabeth, if you have taught me to find beauty in death!" He groaned. "What do you say, Pemberton, is it beautiful?"

"Don't know, John. It's there."

Gale slapped his hand against the cold rock. "Yes, it's there. It's done. There has been a desire under heaven and it has got itself embodied in steel. I must accept it, like it, and embrace it. You will make me a new world of ugliness and steel and death—and whether I like it or whether it's a black vomit in my soul—it's there."

"Yes," Pemberton said. "It's there, where I said to put it."

Gale had gone to bed, in the barracks that housed Milnor and the others. But even when the wind sharpened and the night faced toward dawn, the other two sat in the shadow of tall rocks and watched the copper mountain. Under the arcs that spotted it, steam-shovels buried their snouts in rock. At the half-hours synchronously, there were blasts that shook the earth. Dinkies ran cars in and out of the lights.

Elizabeth spoke out of the darkness, after they had been long silent. "Shall I tell you why we have been

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quiet—why it's enough to sit here beside each other—why there has been peace since we came here?"

He kissed her fingers, and swiftly she leaned to brush her lips across his cheek. "My dear, the bogey was all gone from you when I discovered that you could be tender. Where out of hard-rock and saloons and fighting with your fists, did you learn to kiss my hand? But you should say, yes Elizabeth, yes O woman strange and subtly wise, tell me what damned nonsense has afflicted you this time."

The wind struck shudderingly cold. She buttoned about her chin the rough coat she had worn in the ore-bucket. Then she drew his arms about her. "For warmth," she said, "not emotional tonic. . . . Well, I'll tell you, though it sounds a little mad. It's because you and I, my dear, have somehow grown a little more than lovers by coming to the mine. Why did you hold out against me for so long?—merely because I was not necessary to the mine. Why have I hated the mine ever since I loved you?—merely because I was not part of it."

She shivered languorously. "Oh, my dear, my dear—these you have brought to be——" she swept a hand through darkness toward arcs and steam-shovels and ore-cars, gathering in all the hideous noises, all the demons of energy, all the chaos and the turmoil, "these you have made out of your desire—a desire that whipped you with scorpions in brothels and saloons. And here it is, it *is*. And here, God knows why, I am, too. And somehow I have brought it to be, too. You could not have gone round me in the road, Pemberton. You could not have gone otherwise—could not have walked by any other way. I was there. And so, for good or bad, whether you would or not, I've built

your mine, too. You and I. I've learned that, today, and so have you. That's why there's peace between us tonight. We've gone past love for a moment, Pemberton—or else we've met it fair, full in the face."

She sat up within his arm. "You can't answer, can you?—words never worked for you. It's true. Respite for our hearts, for a moment, because we've found each other." Slowly she loosed a button of her coat, fumbled inside of it, and then led his hand within till, beneath folds of clothing, it cupped the warmth and firmness of her breast. "Always before this has been possession," she whispered. "It will be again—but now, my dear—do you see? Do you see? What is it now but peace while we have realized each other?"

The next day they were at Abbey, and the day following they were ready to leave. The daily freight train, over whose cars swarmed the bearded guards of the Condor, backed up to the spur's end. Pemberton bustled about the caboose, piling its worn cushions for the women. Autumn had reached the canyons that morning on a bitter wind, and he summoned men to make a fire in the cast-iron stove. At last, convinced that Elizabeth would not suffer unduly from the hundred-mile ride, he went out to stroll with her along the track.

Her fingers rested on his arm. They walked in step. The caked sand of Abbey crumbled under their feet. They had been so quietly together! Peace, exaltation, restrained joy. Elizabeth looked levelly in his eyes. Free man and free woman.

"What delicacy of John's," she said, "to leave us alone. But you'll be in Windsor—when?"

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"End of next week. Then I'm going to New York."

"What is there to do here?"

"Make copper." She saw his chin harden. "Blast rock out of the hills till they yell for help. That's all."

The locomotive whistled twice. They turned back toward the train.

"I've grown part of you here," she said. Gale approached. "Are you as proud of our caboose as I am, John?"

"If I had my way, it would be a prairie-schooner."

"It's a car for children—for boys and girls. When I was twelve I should have screamed with joy to ride in it. You will tell me stories of mad ogres all the way to Windsor."

"Caboose this time," Pemberton said. "Next time you come we'll have a private car. Friends of mine don't have to ride cabooses much longer."

"When?" Gale asked.

"When I'm out of the red ink. May or June."

"Are you sure?"

Pemberton shrugged.

They stood together on the rear platform. She leaned against him. Through the door she could see Milnor's wife flounce away, turning her back. Milnor's eyes, clouded with pain and resentment, lingered on her and would not turn aside. Very deliberately, she reached up and drew Pemberton's face down to her own.

The car jolted into motion. He held her hands, crushing them. She would not urge him away, though she was frightened. She saw him drop easily to the ground, running—yes, not men nor trains would kill Pemberton Abbey. He stood beside the track, a

diminishing figure against the blustery autumn sky. Behind him, the Abbey smelters poured out their mingling ribbons of black and yellow and sage-green smoke. Not till she could no longer see him, not till only the smelters stood up above the desert, would she go inside.

"By June," he said to Hobart. He had come back to Windsor just too late for Thanksgiving.

Hobart grew younger before his eyes. "You wouldn't say so if it weren't true."

"It is true—if you've got the bank steady."

"We can keep the bank absolutely sky-clear till June. And then, if the mine is safe, there aren't winds enough in all the world to blow it loose."

"I've got them stopped till June. And by then we'll be making money at Abbey." Pemberton looked through the windows at the close-drawn clouds above the peaks. "Every pig we turn out, now, creeps farther ahead for us. More men, more dynamite, more shovels—that's all it takes. Right now she's paying a profit on every cent I've got into her. By May she'll cover everything, loans, interest, discounts, capitalization, depreciation. By June she'll be cutting down on them—and we'll be——"

"Solvent," Hobart said. "Solvent and safe." His immaculate hands were folded before him. Suddenly they jiggled. An inkwell overturned on the large blotter. A rivulet of ink flowed across the table.

He went on to the mine. One last triumphant spurt. He harried Jeff Farrand to drive more men to the snow-covered levels. He himself was everywhere—like God and gas they had said, years ago, when he

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was Krug's superintendent. Three shifts a day blasted ore from the copper mountain, whether snow fell or winds blew. Ceaselessly it rattled into the dinky cars, roared down the chutes, and careened through the sky toward Abbey. Battalions of fur-wrapped men swarmed over the mountain to shovel it away with scoops. Wages soared. Drink could be had for the asking, when the shift was done. Blizzards swept down on them. They could work for half an hour, for ten minutes—there were sheds with blazing stoves and boiling coffee. The steam-shovels, up to their snouts in snow, crawled on, biting the levels into the rock inch by inch. Tracks went down for them. Dinkies puffed behind, bringing up coal, hauling away ore.

. . . A slide roared down the mountainside. Buildings trembled. A pillar of snow climbed skyward. But the slide was knifed by an abutment, two hundred yards above the workings. It slid out, away and on, roaring destruction till its own brakes stopped it. No inch of the mine was touched. No cog of its machinery was stripped. Pemberton, from the second level, roared and crashed his way to the engine house, to whose roof Jeff Farrand had already climbed with binoculars.

"Are you an engineer!" Pemberton shouted. "God Almighty, you had it gauged to an inch. How are they going to build a canal at the Isthmus without you?"

"Snow's like water," Jeff said, his eyes fast to the binoculars. "When she's ready to go, she'll go—and she'll take the easiest road. . . . There's power in a slide, Pemberton, plumb wasted. By God, before ten years, I'll have slides sweepin' off our levels for us or turnin' our wheels."

"Yeh?" Pemberton was already done with slides. "Well, you go out and make copper, Jeff. There's two shovels dead on the seventh level."

By night they took the telephoned report from the smelters and damned or praised it. On the office wall a clock-like chart kept time with it. Jeff moved the hands solemnly, prayerfully, while Pemberton looked on. The longer had already passed the shorter one. Microscopically, day by day, the distances lengthened between them.

"She'll strike six sometime," Jeff said.

"By June."

"Then get to hell out of here while I call up my wife."

Pemberton sat still before the clock. "Man your age that's got anything to tell his wife some one else can't hear——"

"Well," Jeff conceded, "you can watch them pretty lines for another hour. Nobody ever got Windsor under that." He twirled the crank and told the smelter to begin the job.

Pemberton went out to climb about his mine. To stand in the icy darkness and see the arcs and flares that lighted a thousand men at work. To look off down the canyon he had filled with shacks. To stand beside the chutes and feel them quiver with the rock that slid down them. To curse a boss into more violent assault upon his men. To climb into the warm cab of a steam-shovel, take a throttle in his hands, and feel its muscles pry up a ton of rock and swing it through the night to waiting cars. To feel the air shake when a loaded bucket swung ponderously by.

By God, if Jeff Farrand could telephone, then so could he. The midnight shift had been two hours at

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work, when he heard her voice, faint and far off and infinitely blurred. It was not too faint to lose the sharp edge of alarm.

"Nothing's wrong," he said, "nothing's wrong, Elizabeth. I thought you wouldn't mind being woke. I—well, I wanted to hear you."

The wires brought dimly to his ears, "Darling," and then he made out—"thought maybe a blast had killed you."

"Not me."

The wires quieted for a moment. Her clear, serene voice seemed no farther away than his shoulder. "Only an act of God could kill you, Pemberton. But don't you sleep, ever?"

"No need. We got them licked, Elizabeth. Jeff and me—we only sit here and tell each other that it's all over now."

The wires howled again with many voices. "—all night . . . made me happier still. . . . Good night, my dear."

"Good night." He replaced the receiver, then tore it off again. "Good night, my dear." He ran out of the room, blushing furiously.

Thereafter the smelter had orders to put a line through to her every night at eleven.

He spent Christmas in Windsor, dividing it between her and his son. But he was back at Piegan the next day, and the work roared on. He counted the new arcs by night. On his daily visits to the smelters he watched the storage and loading platforms growing along the track. Copper pigs were still moved by hand-truck, but above the lengthened platforms a steel skeleton was rising, a crane and a conveyor-belt of Jeff's designing. Everywhere pigs of copper, dirty

and bright, green-scummed and polished. More copper, *more copper*. . . . Almost enough.

"We got a call for Mr. Abbey. Windsor."

No one called him after business hours. It would be Elizabeth.

"Is it snowing there, Pemberton?"

"No. Been five above all day."

"Don't think I'm piggish. Can you hear me? It has snowed here for three days. It's been so devilish long since I saw you——"

"Too damned long."

"Then you'll come? Tomorrow?"

"Tonight."

"How can you get to Abbey in time for the freight? Not a bucket——"

"We got a lease on Krug's railway at last."

"Darling! I'll meet you with a cutter."

For all their fire they had never had such utter communion as they had now. Beneath their affectation of a mirthful nonchalance, the depths were broken up. . . . They drove in a cutter along the frozen foothill roads. They took the automobile out as far as it would go among the snowdrifts. There were intimate meals, and long winter evenings at the hearth.

"Do you know?" she said. "I never saw you quiet till you came to this house."

"I never was."

"I didn't think you could be. . . . Well, it's one more completion. That, too, my dear——"

"What?"

"—I've given you." She drew her low chair to the grate, where soft-coal flamed toward the chimney. The fire's sibilance caught her ear and she held up a finger for silence. A great wind was going by over-

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head. "The mercury must be dropping frantically. Listen to the roar . . . like something alive. But we only get the fringes of any storm in Windsor. What must it be at the mine?"

"Come up in March if you want to hear wind."

"Six weeks more? You'll be two months nearer June. You've spent eight days here—and still not a word about going back."

"Don't need to. Nothing to do but make copper. I could stay another week."

Her eyes shone. "If I were attractive enough? My dear, you haven't been away from me at all. Not even to see Hobart——"

"Hobart, hell—not even Gordon."

"Then perhaps you'll stay?"

Standing above her, he laid his hand on her hair. She looked up, her eyes deep. Firelight ran varying shadows across her throat. She patted the floor beside her chair and he sprawled at her feet. He was tall—enormously long, the Abbey stature undiminished, almost deformed at the shoulders, as a hard-rock man should be. He wore the Abbey crest, the vertical wrinkle between his eyes, but it was no longer something that could come and go. It had hardened in its place. His cheeks were tight and spare. . . . This the desert, the mountains, had forged and tempered.

"Well?" He had caught her intent gaze.

"Low-grade copper," she said. "Nothing, dear, only I'm always prying into you—as though I were John Gale. And so—another story, please, about hard-rock men and saloons and tunnels and sudden death."

Pemberton grinned. Between her and Gale and

Gordon, he'd soon have to try his hand at inventing fictions.

" . . . But it wasn't," he concluded, nearly an hour later. "It was only Murphy's shirt. Nobody ever saw him again. Nor nobody ever figured out how a drunk A. O. H. could haul himself up five hundred feet of steel cable and hang by his knees while he took his shirt off—I don't know either. All I've got to say is there was one nigger who had a hell of a lot of loose cash next Saturday. And if Murphy was plastered over half a tunnel that nigger was a good hand at a blast. Sure he did. And he called himself Mr., too, like any uppity nigger——"

He broke off and in one moment was on his feet and out of the door. Frightened, Elizabeth followed him. She saw only the night and, in the yard, Pemberton coming back.

"Somebody at the window. Peeping in. Ran like hell. There——" he pointed toward the corner where she saw someone running, crouched over, through the glare into darkness.

"Pemberton! Who on earth——"

"I got a look at him under the blind. Milnor."

She closed the door, quietly. She walked very slowly to her chair. "How has it ever been possible for me to forget him? But I took it for granted that——what do you suppose is on his mind?"

Pemberton reassured her, his hands on her shoulders. "Do you give a damn? When a man peeks under a shade—when he runs away—you don't need to fret about him."

"You don't know Milnor."

"You do know me."

She smiled, relieved. "That is a reliance. . . .

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Oh, Milnor be—damned. But, my dear—if I've had to have you with me increasingly of late it's because—well, if Milnor has just learned the truth he's twelve months behind every soul in the city, and every time I leave the house, a hundred women point at me behind lace curtains and a hundred men lick their lips and say——”

She saw his hands knot into the fists that had had their share in tales like tonight's—that had not been told to her. “But, Pemberton, you can't massacre a whole city. . . . Never mind, my dear. Does it trouble me a backward glance when we're together? It doesn't when we're not—I remember the two of us, and that's enough.”

“One minute feeling sorry——”

“Would destroy us both. I know. There's no danger. There won't be till I die.”

Very solemnly, she kissed him.

The telephone jangled. “Not Milnor so soon, surely.” She waved him back. “No, let me talk to him first, if it is.”

He followed her into the alcove that housed the instrument. She answered, then paused. “Not Milnor.” She tapped her fingers against the transmitter, waiting. “Oh. . . . Who? . . . All right. I'll hold it. It's Abbey calling, dear. It can't be for me.”

He took the receiver from her and assumed the duty of waiting. Only Jeff would guess to call him here. Only Jeff would call him in any circumstances. And Jeff would not call him unless extraordinary things were happening, unless something had gone wrong. The line hummed and sang and snorted. Fragments of a dozen conversations, infinitely far away. Central said at intervals, “I'm trying to make a connection,”

and called, "Abbey, Abbey Central. Cinnabar, Cinnabar Central."

At last the straw-soft tones of Jeff's voice, a faint shadow of sound. "Pemberton? That you, Pemberton? What? Say, for God's sake, Central, gimme Pemberton Abbey at Windsor. Pemberton?"

"Sure it's me, you damn fool."

"Pemberton? Oh, for God's sake! Say, Pemberton, you better come back, if you're coming. Been snowin' two days. If it snows tomorrow we can't run the railroad any longer. . . . What? Yell louder—use your lungs."

"I said, why should I come back?"

"What? . . . Oh. Well, you couldn't get up short of a week if Krug's dinky does get snowed under. . . . Hey?"

"I said, what if I am gone another week?"

"Nothin'. Only a slide ripped hell out of the bucket line tonight. Six towers gone. Nothin' but Krug's dinky to take ore to the smelters."

"Damn you, Jeff, why didn't you say so? I'll leave on the six o'clock freight. By God, those towers better be up when I get there."

"Say—if it took two days to put one up in Summer——"

"Get on the job. If you hold up copper for one minute——"

"What do you think I been doin'? You make me sick. You shut up, Pemberton, and get back here."

Pemberton shouted into the mouthpiece but no answer came, and presently Central reported that the connection had been broken. Pemberton turned to Elizabeth. "I've got to get back on the morning freight. There goes the holiday."

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"Of course you must. Anyway, Jeff can't separate us tonight and some day you'll not be bothered——"

"By June. I'll put all copper in your hands."

While he hitched a horse to her cutter, at five the next morning, she made him a hurried breakfast. Then she drove him to the station, tied the horse to a curbing, and walked with him to the distant track where the freight was already made up.

A brakeman nodded to him. "Plenty snow. There'll be a plow ahead."

It had begun to fall again, slowly and methodically. Pemberton spread an ungloved hand to test it. "Wet. You go home, Elizabeth. No need to see me go."

"Is it serious—up there?"

"Nothing at all if Jeff keeps the dinky track open or mends the bucket line. Nothin' much anyway—day or two—and plenty ore at Abbey to keep 'em runnin'. Only, when making copper slows up, I go nutty."

"Then you'll be back soon?"

"A week, maybe."

"Then—good-bye, dear." She kissed him, drew away, kissed him again.

He stood on the platform while he could see her in the flares of the railroad yards, walking swiftly through falling snow. Before the memory of her waist had left his arm, she was lost in the darkness. He went into the caboose where oil lamps were dimmer than the red-hot stove. He threw his heavy coat into a corner, and began to draw diagrams on a pad of paper. There was probably no way to repair the bucket line till Spring thawed the rocks. Krug's dinky ore-road must do, then—

Somebody leaped to the platform of the caboose. The door crashed open. It was Milnor Allison.

"I saw her, by God! She drove you down here this morning. I saw you last night, too."

Pemberton had spun round in his chair. "Yes," he said, "and you ran like a rabbit."

"Abbey, God damn you, Abbey, if it's true—oh Christ, tell me what to make of it!"

Pemberton's tautened muscles relaxed, the full length of his body. "Sit down," he said contemptuously. "Get it off your chest. This train moves any minute and I've got work to do."

"My sister—if I've got to believe that Elizabeth Allison has . . . it's got past any mere pride, any petty choice—God damn you, Abbey, the girl hasn't been thought respectable for a year——"

"Stop God-damning me," Pemberton held himself to a tight coldness. "What do you think about her?"

Milnor crumpled into trembling, as if the question had snapped a spring in him. "What can I think? What can a man think, even of his sister? We're—we're decent people——" a sob broke entirely free. "I'm not—I'm not evil-minded. I've been afraid of you from the start. I'd kill you in a flash. . . . Whispers—they've whispered and laughed for months—oh, it never reached me, it never does. I've blundered on to it all in a week. You dissolute, depraved, lecherous—you contaminate every woman who looks at you. But for all that, we've got to swallow you. It's gone past pride. We've got to—she'll see that she must marry you now, and we'll have to——"

Pemberton had laughed. He was still more relieved. "That's it, is it? Shotgun marriage because you've heard things."

Milnor fingered a chair, his knuckles white. "I've

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got to swallow that, too—your blackguardly terms——”

“Listen.” Pemberton’s voice rose the shadow of a tone. “Let’s get this said in plain words. What’s on your mind? What have you seen or heard? What do you believe?”

“I wish to God I knew. If I knew, I’d shoot you where you stand. But Elizabeth has got to marry you—right off.”

“Have you asked her about it?”

“She’d laugh me out of the house. She always has. She’s mocked me every day of my life. But Abbey—good God—that’s what you must see. You’ve pulled yourself into a higher caste. It’s an obligation on you now—you’ve gone too far and now you must convince her.”

“You poor pitiful fool,” Pemberton said.

“Oh, I don’t say she’s been more than wild and willful—though it has been her imprudence urged on by you—the scum of bars and bawdy houses.”

“Yeh? . . . Now, listen, Milnor, listen hard. What do you believe? What do you want to know?”

“Nothing, from you. I want nothing. I ask nothing. I demand nothing. I merely say you’re going to marry my sister.”

“For your sake? Or hers? Or because the town wags its tongue about me?”

“You miserable cur, Abbey, do you suppose I believe she’d stain her soul with you? It’s because I can’t ask the world to believe as well of her or know as much of you.”

“Then listen. This train moves any minute. You’re getting off before it does. I’m coming back in a week, and if you’ve been within a mile of Elizabeth, if you’ve

said a word to her, I'll strangle you with my own hands. Now, get."

Milnor faced him, desperate, stubborn, terrified. "God Almighty, Abbey, you don't even deny——"

"Deny, hell! Would I lie to you about Elizabeth? About Elizabeth and me? You've heard the truth. We're living together. We have been for a good deal more than a year."

"Oh, no! Oh, no! God in heaven, no!"

Milnor collapsed into a chair. Pemberton jerked him to his feet. At the same moment, the train began to move. "We'll settle this when I get back. Get off now before you have to break a leg. And listen, if you say a word to Elizabeth till I'm with her, I'll break your back like I would a lizard's."

He pulled the quite nerveless Milnor to the platform and held him steady, facing forward, on the steps.

"I mean it. I'll kill you. Now jump!"

The face that looked fleetingly up at his was strained and ashen, seamed with abominable hatred. . . . The train gathered speed, clicking over the outlying switches. It whistled at the yard limit and rocked on. Should he have got off and followed Milnor, and put a stop to him? Should he have faced it out now? Pemberton's hand reached up for the air-brake valve. Now—before he said a word. No. No—Milnor had blubbered like a baby, like a yellow dog. No danger from him. No danger when they bellered. Next week would do. . . . The train thundered across a bridge. Upstream, between bare willows, dawn came up through falling snow.

She saw Milnor coming up the walk. The realization that Pemberton was not there turned her cold. She stood poised, whipping courage into her veins, and then answered his ring.

"My dear brother!" she said, "then you still visit me by daylight and the front door?"

She marched ahead of him, her head victorious, into the living-room, where she picked up pieces of cloth and began to sew. She gazed intently at the needle: it must be tranquil, casual, impudent—and she could hardly see for fear. . . . But Milnor! She saw that he was not shaved, that his beard was swarthy above shock-whitened jowls. His throat was moving convulsively.

He stared at her, not quite malevolently, not quite angrily. He was not so much alarmed or enraged as stunned.

"I saw Abbey this morning," he said, after the tension within him had visibly got out of hand.

"That would be before six. So you come to see me at noon."

"I won't be lied to, Elizabeth."

"No one would bother to lie to you, Milnor. Pemberton didn't, did he?"

"That's what I want to know. I don't want you to try—oh, I've known all along, if I'd only had the good sense not to believe in you. I know more than

you think. He was here last night. He was here this morning—he was here all night.”

She laid the sewing aside. She could control her hands better if they were folded in her lap. “Of course he was. All night. And many other nights.”

She had thought that he might strike her, perhaps even kill her. But he only covered his face and groaned. Then she saw that he was crying.

“My dear Milnor, tears over——”

“I didn’t believe him when he said so. I thought it couldn’t be true.”

“One learns to believe what Pemberton says. Particularly when he’s angry.”

The room seemed abnormally quiet. Every cell of her body was writhing for him to go. She felt her teeth cold upon her lip. But she held herself to the chair, and forced herself to watch his unlovely pain. She could not stand the spectacle—but she must. After a while, his shoulders quieted. He was now only pitiful. Then, in a moment he began to bluster and became contemptible. Her own tension lifted when she could despise him.

He said, “We’ll make what we can of it. You’ll marry him as soon as I can get the beggar back from the mountains.”

“Unfortunately, Pemberton isn’t the marrying kind. . . . That’s the worst of being a fool—you don’t understand people. Do you suppose I didn’t understand him the night you showed him to me at the gate? Do you suppose I wouldn’t have married him if I could?”

“Then why——”

“Because I had to have him on his own terms, on any terms. Because I *had* to have him.”

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His eyes widened with bewilderment. "You?"

"I tortured him beyond endurance. I gave him no rest."

"That debauched, lecherous——"

"Not quite, Milnor—and you'll get out of my house before you finish it. You'll get out, anyway. You forced your way in here. Did I ever ask you in? Did I beg you to come here—where Pemberton has never entered without my asking him? I want none of your virtue——"

"Better if I'd protected you from the first——"

"You could never have protected me from—will you understand it's my doing? I wanted everything that has happened. I wanted it and I brought it about. I seduced him with every——"

"Shut up!" he shouted. "I don't believe you. A decent well-bred girl, sheltered, pampered, protected from life——"

"But not successfully. I won in my own right. I wanted Pemberton Abbey for my lover and I got him."

"Then you're a—a——" but his courage failed him and he groaned.

"Oh, say it, say it, speak out for once in your life!" She had cried out from tortured nerves, but she quieted them and added calmly, "Yes, I'm a strumpet—that's what you'd say. You'd never say whore, would you, Milnor? It's what you mean. You mean, I've ravished your self-righteousness by neglecting to sanctify myself with a wedding-ring. I've done just that—and that makes me a whore."

She began to tremble uncontrollably. She sat still, struggling to keep command. Tears rose in her eyes. She winked them away, and shook her head.

"But I've known that I was alive. I've been alive

for a while before dying. I've known the difference between life and death. And I've loved a man—not a trial balance or a rule-book. A man has loved me, and had me—possessed me, do you hear?—and we've grown alive together, in each other's arms."

Still that nerveless collapse. He was sprawled across her couch, quite shipwrecked. She would die if he didn't go.

"God help you if he were to come here now. He'd kill you with his hands. And I won't tolerate you here. Get up, get out of here, leave me alone. Abandon me to hell-fire for a fallen woman, but get up and go. Look as much like a man as you can, but get out."

He went, moving blindly. She doubted whether he could see the door. But, going, he said something very odd, in his half-mesmerized, automatic voice.

"You seem to think that I'm afraid of him."

For an hour after his departure Elizabeth gave herself up to an agony of nerves. Above her fright ran only one intelligible impulse, to summon Pemberton. Should she call him? Call him, call him, get him here, have him in the room! Once, even, she found herself at the telephone, the receiver in her hand. She put it back. . . . Not for the sake of your own miserable comfort. Pemberton, hurling his will against the drifted snows. That's his job at the moment. He can settle Milnor later, when the snows have been defeated. She shuddered. She was picturing what might happen to Milnor Allison when Pemberton should discover that he had frightened her.

But, by evening, her own manias were insupportable. She could not spend an evening alone before the fire.

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She laced herself into stout boots, wrapped furs around her, and went out to tramp the hill roads on the eastern fringe of the city. But everywhere there was the same pressure of alarm, and before long she had rung John Gale's bell.

"John," she said, "I'm nervous and more than a little terrified. Will you talk me into a little self-control?"

He led her into the library where spruce logs were lacquering with gold and shadow the massive stairway of his books. His daughter shyly held out a hand to Elizabeth and then gathered together her possessions, smiled gravely, and left them alone. The room was tangible security and peace. Elizabeth relaxed into a deep chair, set aside from the grate, in the shadow.

Gale was quietly attentive. He stretched her boots out to the fire, offering to ease the lacings. He found pillows to relax her neck and waist. He switched off the sconces that lightened the corners. Then he went off into the house and returned with a decanter and a plate of cakes.

"Burgundy for courage, Elizabeth, and food for a stout heart."

He stood over her while she ate and drank. He was right—her blood warmed and the shadows seemed less ominous. "Now you can talk," he said.

She swept her hand in an irrelevant gesture to include the room. "This is what I mean to have. Firelight and isolation and completeness—with Pemberton. And a daughter to shake the hands of my friends. And it seems—John, I'm horribly afraid I'm not going to have it."

She told him. Her story grew more nervous in the telling, but the very sharing of it reassured her. This

was John Gale, who knew as well as she the omnipotence, the impregnability, of Pemberton Abbey. They were drawn together in realization of him. And realizing, John would see, as she could now see, how frail and phantom-like was the menace of such gnats as Milnor. . . . But, when she had finished and looked smilingly at Gale, she saw in his face more alarm than she would have believed could take refuge there.

"John!"

"Elizabeth, where did he go when he left you? What did he do?"

"How should I know? I only rejoiced that he was gone. John, I was on fire. What is it?"

"Have you telephoned Pemberton?"

"I wanted to. But he mustn't be bothered for my sake——"

"No, for his own."

The uneasiness that had begun to leave her returned when Gale strode to the hallway and began to talk to the operator. He was back at once, and stood beside her. Her anxiety magnified his obvious distress.

"What are you afraid of, John?"

He shrugged. "My dear child, of everything. But most afraid of Pemberton's being away instead of here. Till June! It's a structure built of a child's blocks and he has stood in front of it and beaten off all the gamblers in America—to hold it 'till June.'" Gale groaned over Pemberton's phrase. "He has kicked away those who approached it from behind—Whitaker, Kleinfeld, and all their gunmen. Child's blocks—and the thrust of a child's foot could topple it to the ground."

"What could he do—Milnor?"

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"I don't know. It's not within my understanding. Perhaps nothing at all. But we must get Pemberton here."

They sat together, miserably silent. To Elizabeth the firelit room seemed filled with omens. She thought of the mine as she had seen it, shadowy and immense under the moon, lights glaring from the caverns of its slopes, far spread, fire-leaping, roaring, and alive. The smelters with their arching smokes, the green and violet and purple flames that shot across them, their shuddering walls, the shriek and thunder of their wheels, the rosy glow of the slag in darkness. The thin cobwebs that stretched across the moon, with bundles slung from them hurtling through the night. Nibble, nibble at the copper mountain, the mountain that must be eaten away. Men by the thousand doing the will of Pemberton Abbey, men whose lives were a fever of labor, a lust of work. All this was Pemberton—wrought into stone and flame—Pemberton Abbey, who had known his desire and done it under the sun.

"John," she cried, "no angry fool can beat Pemberton."

"Till June. . . . If a man can make a world alone—but he can't. That was why he brought the brothers Allison to Windsor——"

"And their sister. I wish to God he had never seen me——"

"No," Gale's voice was strained. "No—whatever comes, you are glad, you rejoice with the last fibre of your soul—and so does he."

The telephone jarred them. Elizabeth's breath caught with actual pain. . . . He came back.

"The line is out somewhere along the spur, eighty

miles from here. They'll do nothing till morning. I could not curse them into more. If a man's friend must be as futile as I am! Nothing. I can do nothing."

Till midnight they sat together before the fire. When they spoke it was to comfort each other, to rehearse how no angered Allison would ruin himself and his brother to betray a man he was ingenuous enough to hate. Perhaps, when Milnor laid eyes on Pemberton, he would try murder—but betrayal, when betrayal meant his own extinction—that folly he could not commit.

At last Gale took her home, through the first vagrant flakes of another snowfall. "I'll try to do something tomorrow—I who can do nothing but groan and curse. I'll sit beside the telephone all night—I've commanded them to ring me when there's a circuit. And Hobart—he must be able to do something—something—anything." Then he left her to writhe on a couch before her own fire.

Phantasms tortured her, but somehow she fell asleep to worse visions and wakened to find Hobart bending over her.

"Milnor's gone," he said, "was he here yesterday? Has he found out——"

"Of course!" she cried. "Where has he gone?"

"God knows. His wife says he was home at noon yesterday. No one's seen him since. There's a one-thirty train to Denver—if he's gone there, oh, my God."

"What if he has?"

"A bucketful of papers are gone from the bank. Agreements, contracts, mortgages, notes, securities,

patents—the whole damned Abbey Copper. I've known there was no managing him when he found out—oh, damn Abbey and damn you—if he's gone to Denver he'll sell us out before I can snap my fingers. We'll crash—you and Abbey and I—bank, mine, smelters, everything—like an egg you've stepped on."

He was gone, shouting over his shoulder. "Get to the bank. Bring Gale. I'll see what's to be done."

. . . They were all together. Hobart did what was possible. He harried the telephone company. He learned that Milnor had sent no telegrams, had bought no ticket——

"But he could wire anywhere east of here—he could pay his fare on the train."

Telegrams went out in all directions, to banks, brokers, spies. Elizabeth's pulses throbbed, her temples were feverish, her vision blurred. Gale sat beside her. Hobart was everywhere, shouting, dictating, telephoning.

"Oh, my God," he said at last. "Abbey's got to be here——"

"Could he save things if Milnor has——"

"By a miracle. But Abbey does miracles. But, whether or no, he's got to come. I'll—by God I'll send a train for him if there's no wire through. He's got to take that midnight express to Denver—a train—yes, by God!"

It was four, nearly, then. At once he was telephoning to the railroad, ordering an engine and a car.

"Gale, you'll go. No, I'll send a man——"

"I'll go," Elizabeth said. "Oh, please, Hobart. I'll feel——"

"You too, if you like, but I'll send a man. Gale,

you'll stay here. I'm going to—I'll take the Cheyenne train at five and get out of Cheyenne into Denver. Twenty-four hours behind him."

. . . He was finishing his last directions to half a score of assistants when another messenger approached.

"It's to Milnor. . . . Well, by God." They saw him grow aged and broken before their eyes. "He sold us out—by wire. The yellow bastard! They think he's here. This is an acceptance. But he's there by now—with a satchel full of papers. He's reaching them now. He is in Denver, tonight."

Hobart sprawled over the table. "Sold out," he groaned. "Everything we've got."

Gale, galvanized out of his stupor, was pulling him to his feet. "You can make the Cheyenne train. I'll put Elizabeth on hers. In the name of God, don't give up without Pemberton."

Hobart was an old man before them. But he shook himself into action. "Let her get to the train by herself. You watch the telephone."

He limped out into the bank. Elizabeth sprang up and gathered her things together. The man who was to summon Pemberton was waiting at the door.

"I'll have him here before morning," she said. "Good-bye, John."

She, too, went out into the bronze and marble foyer of the bank. Gale closed the door after her, shutting himself into a dim room with an instrument that was now dumb, that must, *must* bring Pemberton's voice across the mountains and summon him home to catastrophe.

"Hamstrung by a fool," he said.

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The ore-train that took Pemberton up the canyon bucked against great drifts and falling snow. It made Piegan, but the next one that left the mine had to be abandoned four miles from the smelters. Thereafter the snow fell steadily and no ore was moved. Drifts swept across the embankment. The fall leveled off all drifts. The railroad was, for as long as the snow fell, quite dead.

At the mine, Pemberton met the shift coming off work. Jeff Farrand said: "Can't mine copper in no blizzard. Foolish."

Pemberton cursed, and agreed. There was no point in wasting life and money. "How long, for God's sake how long is it going to snow?"

"Year of the big wind it snowed for seven years. Hell, what do you care? Copper enough at Abbey to run the smelters for a week. We'll be shippin' long before that."

"All right—but what about those towers for the bucket-line?"

"You need an engineer, Pemberton, always did. You go get a man that can pick a safe route."

The blizzard went on burying the Piegan. In the bunkhouses the crews roared and drank and gambled, rejoicing in a holiday at full pay. But all that afternoon and all the night that followed it, while the winds roared and the snow fell, Jeff and Pemberton were outfitting and rehearsing a gang of fifty men in the largest storehouse. Shovels, picks, blasting powder, steel rods, girders, cement, acetylene furnaces, cables—the materials that would support the assault. By morning the two leaders were alone, over charts and sketches. Two hundred shovelers here. A hundred with scoops, there. A hundred more to pass up ma-

terial over that twelve-foot ledge. Forty cooks. Twenty monkey-men. Two hundred to keep the lines open and functioning. And all the rest, two thousand of them, to dig out the steam-shovels, clear the levels, start copper into motion once again.

By eight in the morning, the last plan was made, the last subordinate instructed. Pemberton slept for an hour or two, but waked again and tramped about the office cursing the snow which still fell heavily.

At four that afternoon, he said, "We can't start on the towers till morning, now. But the minute she stops, run the whole force out to clear the levels."

An hour later the wind dropped, and at six the whistles all over camp were shrilling. Through the darkness the crews ran out to their places. The snow was soft and wet. They shouted when an arc-light burst into glow on the first level. There was plenty whisky, plenty work. The bosses cursed them into frantic activity. Another arc, beside the ore-shed. Another on the first level. Another on the second, half a yard above the snow. Three thousand men charged down upon the mine.

It was eight o'clock when Jeff and Pemberton could be satisfied that work was under way at last. They came into the office, tired, hollow-eyed, but triumphant. A boy rushed out for a tray of smoking soup and stew, coffee, brandy.

Pemberton grinned. "We're digging her out. We'll be makin' copper again in the morning. And your damn towers. Sometimes, Jeff, I wish to God I'd mined silver. You don't give a damn for snow, a thousand feet down. No, and no slides wipe out your line."

The telephone rang the four short signals that

meant Pemberton. He answered and, after a time, recognized Gale's voice. . . . Jeff saw him grow tense: he seemed to tighten his muscles into a crouch. Over the wires came the faint metallic scratching of someone's voice.

"All right, John," Pemberton said at last. "I'll come."

He hung up and turned to Jeff. "Get me snowshoes. And a flask of brandy, a pint. Get me my fur cap."

"Now for God's sake——"

"Do what you're told."

Pemberton was already kicking off the rubber boots he wore. He found his leather boots and hurried into them.

"Can I make Abbey by midnight? Doesn't matter—Elizabeth's coming with a special train."

"You can't——"

"Milnor sold me out. He's gone to Denver with my mine. It's the mine and smelters, Jeff."

"You can't get out tonight."

"I could get out of hell tonight. Slip that flask in my pocket and button it."

"Pemberton, for Christ's sake——"

"What?"

"Don't go. Wait till morning."

"Give Milnor twelve hours more? By God, Jeff, it's a million to one I can't save it as it is."

"I'm not letting you go, Pemberton."

"You're keeping out of my way."

"I know it's stopped snowing, but my God, it can start again."

"What if it does? You want another boss, Jeff?"

. . . And, by God, don't you make a move. I'll knock you down."

He rolled the sheepskin collar over his neck, and pulled down the cap to meet it. He tucked a silk bandana carefully into all the crevices, and wound another under his chin and over his cheeks. "Be colder than a dead man's heart if the wind comes up. Colder the better. Good-bye, Jeff."

He held out his hand. Jeff's fingers gripped Pemberton's, and his hand touched his shoulder. Pemberton tied the rawhide thongs tighter about his feet. He looped the last knot back over itself.

"I've done it before, Jeff. . . . You make copper—till you hear I'm licked."

He shuffled through the door into the night. The mountain was noisy with men shouting. He counted the arcs that were lighted on his mine. His mine, by God, his mine.

His shoes sank deeply into the wet snow. He could not, for all his strength, make more time running than walking. The night was abominably dark. No stars. His hips ached from the strain. He grunted, lowered his shoulders, and swung on.

After two hours—he estimated—he reached the Whitetail. The Piegan Condor shacks were deep in snow, with here and there the gleam of a lamp or a lantern. Down the Whitetail now. Keep to the embankment. Hell, it was all embankment.

His mind rioted with visions of Milnor. Milnor in Denver. Milnor at a table and a dozen men around him. Men who had spent five years trying to beat Pemberton Abbey, or kill him, and now, when he had won, could buy him from a partner. How much could he save? What could he do?

His blood came strong and confident through his veins. A man was not licked till he was dead. He could, he would—his mine—it could not be taken away from him. Never yet, never in his life—no one, no one at all. Was he less a man now than before? . . . It was easier going, now. His hips no longer ached. His shoulders swung in a strong rhythm, even, powerful, irresistible. No, by God, he was still alive. This, now, this was the saddle. He saw, immediately before him, a line of links done in snow, the abandoned ore-train. Straight across them, now, on the diagonal. He stopped in his tracks to take a bearing. It was hard to see. The slanting white shoulder, far off. He must pass that at the tip. It was hard to see, murky, oppressively dark. The slanting shoulder dimmed.

First or last, he must get Milnor. Pictures snapped across his mind. He shut them off. He must think of what was to be done. He must deal not with Milnor but with those he had sold out to. What, probably, had Milnor done? What had he delivered to them? What could they use at once? His mind raced on to possibilities, to certainties, to preparations and defences.

He stopped again. Where was that slanting shoulder he must pass? Where was that dim, obscure, wavering bulk of snow? He peered about him. It had vanished. Slowly he turned to the right, to the rear, back again to the front, to the left. He could not see it. It was gone, wholly.

Then he saw that it had begun to snow.

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De Voto, Bernard

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